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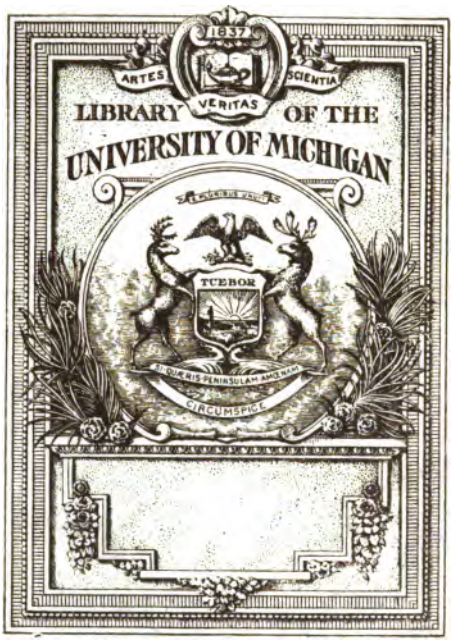
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A "LITTLE BEES" DINING-ROOM FOR SUB-NORMAL CHILDREN

WOMEN OF BELGIUM

TURNING TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

By

CHARLOTTE KELLOGG

With an Introduction By

HERBERT C. HOOVER

Chairman of The Commission for Relief in Belgium

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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1917

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INTRODUCTION

By Herbert Hoover

Belgium, after centuries of intermittent misery and recuperation as the cockpit of Europe, had with a hundred years of the peaceful fruition of the intelligence, courage, thrift, and industry of its people, emerged as the beehive of the Continent. Its population of 8,000,000 upon an area of little less than Maryland was supported by the importation of raw materials, and by their manufacture and their exchange over-seas for two-thirds of the vital necessities of its daily life.

When in the summer of 1914 the people were again drawn into the European maelstrom, 600,000 of them became fugitives abroad, and the remainder were re-

duced to the state of a city which, captured by a hostile army, is in turn besieged from without. Thus, its boundaries were a wall of bayonets and a blockading fleet.

Under modern economic conditions, no importing nation carries more than a few weeks' reserve stock of food, depending as it does upon the daily arrivals of commerce; and the cessation of this inflow, together with the destruction and requisition of their meager stocks, threatened the Belgians with an even greater catastrophe—the loss of their very life.

With the stoppage of the industrial clock, their workpeople were idle, and destitution marched day and night into their slender savings, until to-day three and a half million people must be helped in charity.

The Belgians are a self-reliant people who had sought no favors of the world, and their first instinct and continuing endeavor has been to help themselves. Not

only were all those who had resources insistent that they should either pay now or in the future for their food, but far beyond this, they have insisted upon caring for their own destitute to the fullest extent of those remaining resources—the charity of the poor toward the poor. They have themselves set up no cry for benevolence, but the American Relief Commission has insisted upon pleading to the world to help in a burden so far beyond their ability.

This Commission was created in order that by agreement with the belligerents on both sides, a door might be opened in the wall of steel, through which those who had resources could re-create the flow of supplies to themselves; that through the same channel, the world might come to the rescue of the destitute, and beyond this that it could guarantee the guardianship of these supplies to the sole use of the people.

Furthermore, due to the initial moral, social and economic disorganization of the country and the necessary restriction on movement and assembly, it was impossible for the Belgian people to project within themselves, without an assisting hand, the organization for the distribution of food supplies and the care of the impoverished. Therefore the Relief Organization has grown to a great economic engine that with its collateral agencies monopolizes the import food supply of a whole people, controlling directly and indirectly the largest part of the native products so as to eliminate all waste and to secure justice in distribution; and, above all, it is charged with the care of the destitute.

To visualize truly the mental and moral currents in the Belgian people during these two and a half years one must have lived with them and felt their misery. Overriding all physical suffering and all

trial is the great cloud of mental depression, of repression and reserve in every act and word, a terror that is so real that it was little wonder to us when in the course of an investigation in one of the large cities we found the nursing period of mothers has been diminished by one-fourth. Every street corner and every crossroad is marked by a bayonet, and every night resounds with the march of armed men, the mark of national subjection. Belgium is a little country and the sound of the guns along a hundred miles of front strikes the senses hourly, and the hopes of the people rise and fall with the rise and fall in tones which follow the atmospheric changes and the daily rise and fall of battle. Not only do hope of deliverance and anxiety for one's loved ones fighting on the front vibrate with every change in volume of sound, but with every rumor which shivers through the population. At first the morale of a

whole people was crusht: one saw it in every face, deadened and drawn by the whole gamut of emotions that had exhausted their souls, but slowly, and largely by the growth of the Relief Organization and the demand that it has made upon their exertion and their devotion, this morale has recovered to a fine flowering of national spirit and stoical resolution. The Relief Commission stands as an encouragement and protection to the endeavors of the Belgian people themselves and a shield to their despair. By degrees an army of 55,000 volunteer workers on Relief had grown up among the Belgian and French people, of a perfection and a patriotism without parallel in the existence of any country.

To find the finance of a nation's relief requiring eighteen million dollars monthly from economic cycles of exchange, from subsidies of different governments, from the world's public charity; to purchase

300,000,000 pounds of concentrated foodstuffs per month of a character appropriate to individual and class; to secure and operate a fleet of seventy cargo ships, to arrange their regular passages through blockades and war zones; to manage the reshipment by canal and rail and distribution to 140 terminals throughout Belgium and Northern France; to control the milling of wheat and the making of bread; to distribute with rigid efficiency and justice not only bread but milk, soup, potatoes, fats, rice, beans, corn, soap and other commodities; to create the machinery of public feeding in cantines and soup-kitchens; to supply great clothing establishments; to give the necessary assurances that the occupying army receives no benefit from the food supply; to maintain checks and balances assuring efficiency and integrity—all these things are a man's job. To this service the men of Belgium and Northern France have given

the most stedfast courage and high intelligence.

Beyond all this, however, is the equally great and equally important problem—the discrimination of the destitute from those who can pay, the determination of their individual needs—a service efficient, just and tender in its care of the helpless.

To create a network of hundreds of cantines for expectant mothers, growing babies, for orphans and debilitated children; to provide the machinery for supplemental meals for the adolescent in the schools; to organize workrooms and to provide stations for the distribution of clothing to the poor; to see that all these reliefs cover the field, so that none fall by the wayside; to investigate and counsel each and every case that no waste or failure result; to search out and provide appropriate assistance to those who would rather die than confess poverty; to direct

these stations, not from committee meetings after afternoon tea, but by actual executive labor from early morning till late at night—to go far beyond mere direction by giving themselves to the actual manual labor of serving the lowly and helpless; to do it with cheerfulness, sympathy and tenderness, not to hundreds but literally to millions, this is woman's work.

This service has been given, not by tens, but by thousands, and it is a service that in turn has summoned a devotion, kindliness and tenderness in the Belgian and French women that has welded all classes with a spiritual bond unknown in any people before. It has implanted in the national heart and the national character a quality which is in some measure a compensation for the calamities through which these people are passing. The soul of Belgium received a grievous wound, but the women of Bel-

gium are staunching the flow—sustaining and leading this stricken nation to greater strength and greater life.

We of the Relief have been proud of the privilege to place the tools in the hands of these women, and have watched their skilful use and their improvement in method with hourly admiration. We have believed it to be so great an inspiration that we have daily wished it could be pictured by a sympathizing hand, and we confess to insisting that Mrs. Kellogg should spend some months with her husband during his administration of our Brussels office. She has done more than record in simple terms passing impressions of the varied facts of the great work of these women, for she spent months in loving sympathy with them.

We offer her little book as our, and Mrs. Kellogg's, tribute in admiration of them and the inspiration which they have contributed to this whole organization.

This devotion and this service have now gone on for nearly 900 long days. Under unceasing difficulties the tools have been kept in the hands of these women, and they have accomplished their task. All of this time there have stood behind them our warehouses with from thirty to sixty days' supplies in advance, and tragedy has thus been that distance remote. Our share and the share of these women has therefore been a task of prevention, not a task of remedy. Our task and theirs has been to maintain the laughter of the children, not to dry their tears. The pathos of the long lines of expectant, chattering mites, each with a ticket of authority pinned to its chest or held in a grimy fist, never depresses the mind of childhood. Nor does fear ever enter their little heads lest the slender chain of finance, ships and direction which supports these warehouses should fail, for has the canteen ever failed in all these two and a

half years? That the day shall not come when some Belgian woman amid her tears must stand before its gate to repeat: *"Mes petites, il n'y en a plus,"* is simply a problem of labor and money. In this America has a duty, and the women of America a privilege.

HERBERT HOOVER.

WOMEN OF BELGIUM

TURNING TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

I

THE LEADERS

THE story of Belgium will never be told. That is the word that passes oftenest between us. No one will ever by word of mouth or in writing give it to others in its entirety, or even tell what he himself has seen and felt. The longer he stays the more he realizes the futility of any such attempt, the more he becomes dumb. It requires a brush and color beyond our grasp; it must be the picture of the soul of a nation in travail, of the lifting of the strong to save the weak. We may, however, choose certain angles of vision from which we see,

thrown into high relief, special aspects of an inexpressible experience.

One of these particular developments is the unswerving devotion of the women of Belgium to all those hurt or broken by the tragedy within and without her gates. How fortunate are these women, born to royal leadership, to have found in their Queen the leader typifying the highest ideal of their service, and the actual comrade in sorrow, working shoulder to shoulder with them in the hospitals and kitchens. The battle-lines may separate her wounded and suffering from theirs, but they know always that she is there, doing as they are doing, and more than they are doing.

Never were sovereigns more loved, more adored than Albert and Elizabeth. All through these two years people have been borne up by the vision of the day of their return. "But how shall we be able to stand it?" they say. "We shall go mad

with joy!" "We shall not be able to speak for weeping and shouting!" "We shall march from the four corners of the country on foot in a mighty pilgrimage to Brussels, the King shall know what we think of him as man and leader!"

When they speak of the Queen all words are inadequate; they place her first as woman, as mother, as tender nurse. They are proud, and with reason, of her intelligence and sound judgment. Under her father, a distinguished oculist, she received a most rigorous education; she is equipped in brain as well as in heart for her incalculable responsibilities. I was told the other day that she dislikes exceedingly having her photograph as "nurse" circulate, feeling that people may think she wishes to be known for her good works. But whether she wishes it or not, she is known and will be known throughout history for her good works—for her clear, clean vision of right, her swift

courage, and her utter devotion to each and all of her people. Albert and Elizabeth, A and E, these letters are written on the heart of Belgium.

If in the United States we have been too far away to realize in detail what the work of the Queen has been, we have had on our own shores the unforgettable example of her dear friend, Marie de Page, to prove to us the heroism of the women of Belgium.

Before she came, we knew of her. After the first two months of the war she had left her mother and father and youngest boy in Brussels—realizing that she was cutting herself off from all news of them—to follow her husband, who had himself followed his King to Le Havre. She worked her way across the frontier to Flushing, and finally to La Panne. The whole career of Doctor de Page had been founded on her devoted cooperation, and one has imagined the joy of that reunion

in the great base hospital at La Panne, where he was in charge. Her eldest son was already in the trenches, the second, seventeen years old, was waiting his turn.

She worked as a nurse at her husband's side, day and night, until she could no longer bear to see the increasing needs of the wounded without being able to relieve them, and she determined to seek aid in America. This journey, even in peace time, is a much more formidable undertaking for an European than for an American woman, but Marie de Page started alone, encouraged always by her good friend, the Queen. And how swiftly, how enduringly, she won our hearts, as from New York to San Francisco she told so simply and poignantly her country's story!

She was a Belgian woman; so, even in her great trouble, she could not neglect her personal appearance, and after the fatiguing journey across the Continent,

she looked fresh and charming as we met her in San Francisco. The first day at luncheon we were plying her with questions, until finally she laughed and said, "If you don't mind, I had better spread the map on the table—then you will see more quickly all the answers!" We moved our plates while she took the precious plan from her bag, and smoothed it across her end of the table. Then with her pencil she marked off with a heavy line the little part that is still free Belgium: she drew a star in front of La Panne Hospital and we were orientated! From point to point her pencil traveled as we put our eager questions. We marveled at the directness with which she brought her country and her people before us. We knew that her own son was in the trenches, but she made it impossible for us to think of herself.

Then, tho there was much more to be done in America, she left. She must re-

turn to La Panne; her husband needed her. She had just received word that her seventeen-year-old son was to join his brother in the trenches; she hurried to New York. She did not wish to book on a non-neutral line, but further word showed her that her only chance to see her boy lay in taking the fastest possible ship. Fortunately the biggest, safest one was just about to leave, so she carried on board the money and supplies she was taking back to her people.

We settled down to doing what we could to carry forward her work. Then, on May 7, 1915, flashed the incredible, the terrible news—the greatest passenger liner afloat had been torpedoed! The Lusitania had sunk in twenty-two minutes, 1,198 lives had been lost. We went about dazed.

One by one the recovered bodies were identified, and among them was that of Marie de Page.

We have found some little consolation in endowing beds in her memory in the hospital for which she gave her life. She is buried in the sand dunes not far from it; whenever Doctor de Page looks from his window, he looks on her grave.

"In"

As the only American woman member of the Commission for Relief I was permitted to enter Belgium in July, 1916.

I already knew that this country held 3,000,000 destitute; that over one and one-quarter million depended for existence entirely on the daily "soupes"; that between the soup-lines and the rich (who in every country, in every catastrophe, can most easily save themselves) there were those who, after having all their lives earned a comfortable living, now found their sources of income vanished, and literally faced starvation. For this large body, drawn from the industrial, commercial

and professional classes, from the nobility itself, the suffering was most acute, most difficult to discover and relieve.

I knew that at the beginning of the war the great organizing genius of Herbert Hoover had seized the apparently unsolvable problem of the *Relief of Belgium,* and with an incredible swiftness had forced the cooperation of the world in the saving of this people who had not counted the cost of defending their honor. That because of this, every day in the month, ships, desperately difficult to secure, were pushing across the oceans with their cargoes of wheat and rice and bacon, to be rushed from Rotterdam through the canals to the C. R. B. warehouses throughout Belgium. It meant the finding of millions of money—$250,000,000 to date —begging of individuals, praying to governments, the pressing of all the world to service.

I realized, too, that the Belgian men,

under the active leadership of Messieurs Solvay, Francqui, de Wouters and Janssen, with a joint administration of Americans and Belgians, were organized into the Comité National, whose activities covered every square foot of the country, determining the exact situation, the exact need of each section, and who were responsible for the meeting of the situation locally and as a whole.

But I knew from the lips of the Chairman of the C. R. B. himself, that despite all the work of the splendid men of these organizations, the martyrdom of Belgium was being prevented by its women. I was to learn in what glorious manner, in what hitherto undreamed of degree, this was true—that the women of Belgium, true to the womanhood and motherhood of all ages, were binding the wounds and healing the soul of their country!

II

THE "SOUPES"

I SHALL never think of Belgium without seeing endless processions of silent men and black-shawled women, pitchers in hand, waiting, waiting for the day's pint of soup. One and one-quarter million make a long procession. If you have imagined it in the sunshine, think of it in the rain!

One may shut himself up in his house and forget the war for a few hours, but he dare not venture outside. If he does he will quickly stumble against a part of this line, or on hundreds of little children guarding their precious cards as they wait to be passed in to one of the "Enfants Débiles" dining-rooms, or on a very long line of women in front of a

communal store where "identity cards" permit the purchase every week of limited rations of American bacon or rice and a few other foods at fixt prices (prices set by American efficiency below those of America itself); or on a group of black-shawled mothers waiting for the dinner that enables them to nurse the babies in their arms.

The destitute must have a "supplement" to their daily ration of carbohydrates and fat which will give them protein—says the C. R. B., and thus we have "Soupes";—but these dry statements of engineers now become dieticians convey to no one the human story of these dumb, waiting lines.

We can have little conception of what it means for just one city, the Agglomeration of Brussels, for instance, to keep 200,000 out of its 1,000,000 people on the "Soupes," not for a month or two, but for over two years! Nor does this

include the soup made by the "Little Bees," an organization which cares especially for children, for the thousands in their cantines; or the soup served to the 8,500 children in sixty communal schools of central Brussels at four o'clock each afternoon, which is prepared in a special kitchen. These quantities are all over and above the regular soup served to 200,000 —and do not think of soup as an American knows it, think more of a kind of stew; for it is thick, and, in the words of the C. R. B., "full of calories."

To make it for central Brussels the slaughter-house has been converted into a mighty kitchen, in charge of a famous pre-war maître d'hôtel. Ninety-five cooks and assistants from the best restaurants of the capital have been transferred from the making of pâtés and soufflés to the daily preparation of 25,000 quarts of soup! And they use the ingenuity born of long experience, to secure an appetiz-

ing variety while strictly following the orders of directing physicians. They had been doing this over 700 days when I visited the kitchen, but there was still a fresh eagerness to produce something savory and different. And one must remember that the changes can come only from shifting the emphasis from our dried American peas to beans, from carrots to cabbages, from macaroni to rice. The quantity of meat remains about the same, 1,200 pounds a day, which, tho the committee kills its own cattle, costs almost fifty cents a pound. There must be, too, 10,000 pounds of potatoes. The great fear has been that this quantity might be cut, and unfortunately, in November, 1916, that fear was realized to the extent of a 2,000 pound drop—and then remedied by the C. R. B. with more beans, more rice, more peas!

Personal inspection of this marvelous kitchen is the only thing that could give

an idea of its extraordinary cleanliness. The building offers great space, plenty of air and light and unlimited supply of water. The potato rooms, where each potato is put through two peeling processes, are in one quarter. Near them are the green vegetable rooms with their stone troughs, where everything is washed four or five times. The problem of purchasing the vegetables is so great that a special committee has been formed at Malines to buy for Brussels on the spot. One of the saving things for Belgium has been that she produces quantities of these delicious greens. In the smaller towns a committeeman usually goes each morning to market the day's supply. For instance, the lawyer who occupies himself with the vegetables for the Charleroi soup, makes his own selection at four o'clock each morning, and is extravagantly proud of the quality of his carrots and lettuces! The most important section, naturally,

is that which cares for the meat and unsmoked bacon or "lard" the C. R. B. brings in. The more fat in the soup, the happier the recipient! With the little meat that can still be had in the butcher shop, selling at over one dollar a pound, one can imagine what it means to find a few pieces in the pint of soup! Then there is the great kitchen proper, with the one hundred and forty gas-heated caldrons, and the dozens of cooks hurrying from one to another. There seem to be running rivers of water everywhere, a perpetual washing of food and receptacles and premises.

The first shift of cooks arrives at two-thirty in the morning to start the gas under the one hundred and forty great kettles, for an early truck-load of cans must be off at 8 o'clock. That shift leaves at noon; the second works from 8 till 5, on an average wage of four francs a day and *soupe!*

There are ten of the large trucks and 500 of the fifty-quart cans in constant use. As soon as the 8 o'clock lot come back, they are quickly cleaned, refilled, and hurried off on their second journey. Mostly they are hurried off through rain, for there are many more rainy than sunny days in Belgium.

One passes a long line of patient, wet, miserable-looking men and women with their empty pitchers, then meets with a thrill the red truck bringing the steaming cans. The bakers have probably already delivered the 25,000 loaves of bread, for a half loaf goes with each pint of soup.

By following one of these steaming trucks I discovered "Soupe 18," with its line of silent hundreds stretching along the wet street.

I was half an hour early, so there was time to talk with the local committee managers who were preparing the big hall for

the women who would arrive in a few minutes to fill the pitchers with soup, and the string bags with bread. These communal soupes are generally directed by men, tho women do the actual serving. The enthusiastic secretary, who had been a tailor before the war, said regretfully that he had been obliged to be absent three days in the two years.

At the left, near the entrance, I was shown the office with all the records, and with the shelves of precious pots of jam and tiny packages of coffee and rice which are given out two or three times a month—in an attempt to make a little break in the monotony of the continual soup. No one can picture the heart-breaking eagerness in the faces of these thousands as they line up for this special distribution—these meager spoonfuls of jam, or handfuls of chopped meat.

We reviewed the army of cans stationed toward the rear, and the great

bread-racks of either side. The committee of women arrived; we tasted the soup and found it good. I was asked to sit at the table with two men directors, where I might watch them stamp and approve the ration-cards as the hungry passed in.

One may hate war, but never as it should be hated until he has visited the communal soupes and the homes represented by the lines. The work must be so carefully systematized that there is only time for a word or two as they pass the table. But that word is enough to reveal the tragedy! There are sometimes the undeserving, but it is not often that any of the thousands who file by are not in pitiful straits. That morning the saddest were the very old—for them the men had always a kindly "How is it, mother? How goes it, father?"

The "Merci, Monsieur, merci beaucoup," of one sweet-faced old woman was so evidently the expression of genuine

feeling, that I asked about her. She had three sons, who had supported her well—all three were in the trenches. Another still older, said, "Thank you very much," in familiar English. She, too, had been caught in the net, and there was no work. A little Spanish woman had lost her husband soon after the war began, and the director who investigated the case was convinced that he had died of hunger. An old French soldier on a crutch, but not too feeble to bow low as he said "Merci," was an unforgettable figure.

Some of the very old and very weak are given supplementary tickets which entitle them to small portions of white bread, more adapted to their needs than the stern war bread of the C. R. B.; and every two days mothers are allowed additional bread for their children. One curly-haired little girl was following her mother and grandmother, and slipt out of the line to offer a tiny hand. Then

came a tall, distinguished-looking man, about whom the directors knew little—except that he was absolutely without funds. They put kindly questions to the poor hunchback, who had just returned to the line from the hospital, and congratulated the pretty girl of fifteen, who had won all the term's prizes in the communal school. There were those who had never succeeded; then there were those who two years before had been comfortable—railway employees, artists, men and women, young and old, in endless procession, a large proportion in carpet slippers, or other substitutes for leather shoes. Many were weak and ill-looking; all wore the stamp of war. Every day they must come for the pint of soup and the bread that meant life—200,000 in Brussels alone; in Belgium one and a half million! These are the lowest in the scale of misery—those who "must have a supplement of protein," for

meat never passes their lips but in soup.

The questions were always swift, admitting no delay in the reply, and knowing the hearts of the questioners, I wondered a little at this. Till in a flash I saw: if the directors wished to know more they would go to the homes represented—but the line must not be held back! Every ten minutes' halt means that those outside in the rain must stand ten minutes longer. On this particular day the committee put through a line representing 2,500 pints of soup and portions of bread in fifty minutes, an almost incredible efficiency, especially when you remember that every card is examined and stamped as well as every pitiful pitcher and string bag filled.

That day a woman who had not before served on the soupes offered her services to the seasoned workers. They were grateful, but smilingly advised her to go home, fill her bath tub with water,

and ladle it out—to repeat this the following day and the following, until finally she might return, ready to endure the work, and above all, not to retard the "Line" five unnecessary minutes! Two and a half years have not dulled the tenderness of these women toward the wretched ones they serve.

At Home

Belgium is small. Until now I had been able to go and return in the same day. But on this particular evening I found myself too far south to get back. I was in a thickly forested, sparsely settled district, but I knew that farther on there was a great château belonging to the family of A., with numerous spare rooms.

Tho I had been in Belgium only a short time I had already learned how unmeasured is the friendship offered us, but I also knew that Belgian etiquette and

convention were extremely rigorous, and I hesitated.

It was thoroughly dark, when, after crossing a final stretch of beechwood, I rang the bell and sent in my card, with a brief line.

After what seemed an endless time I saw the servant coming back through the great hall, followed by three women, who, I felt instinctively, had not come in welcome.

But there was no turning about possible now—some one was already speaking to me. Her very first words showed she could not in the least have understood. And I swiftly realized this was not surprizing since I had been there so short a time, and there had not before been a woman delegate. I explained that my sole excuse for sending in my stranger's card at that time of night was my membership in the C. R. B.—and I uncovered my pin.

It was as if I had revealed a magic symbol—the door swung wide! They took my hands and drew me inside, overwhelming me with apologies, with entreaties to stop with them, to stay for a week, or longer. They would send for my husband—as Director he must be sorely in need of a few days' rest—we should both rest. Their district in the forest had many relief centers, they would see that I got to them all. A room was all ready for me on the floor above—if I did not like it I should have another. I must have some hot tilleul at once!

In the drawing-room I was presented to the other thirteen or fourteen members of the family, and in pages I could not recount their beautiful efforts, individually and together, to make me forget I had had to wait for one moment on their threshold.

Still later, two American men arrived. They were known, and expected at any

hour of the day or night their duties might bring them that way. One of them was ill, and not his own mother and sister could have been more solicitous in their care of him than were these kind women.

Do Americans wonder that it hurts us, when we return, to have people praise us for what we have given Belgium? In our hearts we are remembering what Belgium has given us.

III

THE CRADLES ON THE MEUSE

DINANT made me think of Pompeii. It had been one of the pleasure-spots of Belgium; gay, smiling, it stretched along the tranquil Meuse, at the base of granite bluffs and beech-covered hill-slopes. There were factories, it is true, at either end of the town; but they had not marred it. Every year thousands of visitors, chiefly English and Germans, had stopt there to forget life's grimness. Dinant could make one forget: she was joyous, lovable, laughing. Before the tragedy of her ruins, one felt exactly as if a happy child had been crusht or mutilated.

I came to Dinant in September, 1916,

by the way of one of the two cemeteries where her 600, shot in August, 1914, are buried. This burial-ground is on a sunny hill-slope overlooking rolling wheat fields, and the martyred lie in long rows at the upper corner. A few have been interred in their family plots, but mostly they are gathered in this separate place.

Up and down I followed the narrow paths; the crowded plain white crosses with their laconic inscriptions spoke as no historian ever will. "Father, Husband, and Son"; "Brother and Nephew"; "Husband and Sons, one seventeen, and another nineteen"; "Brother and Father"; "Husband and Brother"; "Brother, Sons and Father"; "Father and Son"—the dirge of the desolation of wives and sisters and mothers! War that had left them the flame-scarred skeletons of their homes, had left them the corpses of their loved ones as well!

Dinant was not entirely destroyed, but

a great part of it was. A few days after the burning, people began to crawl back. They came from hiding-places in the hills, from near-by villages, from up and down the river, to take up life where they had left it. Human beings are most extraordinarily adaptable: people were asked where they were living; no one could answer exactly, but all knew that they were living somewhere, somehow—in the sheltered corner of a ruined room, perhaps in a cave, or beside a chimney! The relief committee hurried in food and clothing, hastily constructed a few temporary cottages; a few persons began to rebuild their original homes, and life went on.

I was walking through a particularly devastated section, nothing but skeleton façades and ragged walls in sight, when suddenly from the midst of the devastation I heard the merry laughter of children. I pushed ahead to look around the

other side of a wall, and there was a most incredible picture. In front of a low temporary building tucked in among the ruins, was a series of railed-in pens for children to play in. And there they were romping riotously—fifty-two golden-haired, lovely babies, all under four! Along the front of the enclosure was a series of tall poles carrying gaily painted cocks and cats and lions. That is the Belgian touch; no relief center is too discouraging to be at once transformed into something cheering, even beautiful. The babies had on bright pink-and-white checked aprons. I let myself in, and they dashed for me, pulling my coat, hiding in the folds of my skirt, deciding at once that I was a good horse.

Then happened a horrible thing. One of the tiniest, with blue eyes and golden curls, ran over to me laughing and calling, "Madame, mon père est mort!" "Madame, my father is dead, my father is

dead, he was shot!" I covered my ears with my hands, then snatched her up and silenced her. There were others ready to call the same thing, but the nurses stopt them.

The little ones went on with their romping while I passed inside to see the equipment for caring for them. In a good-sized, airy room were long rows of white cradles, one for each child, with his or her name and age written on a white card at the top. After their play and their dinner they were put to sleep in these fresh cradles.

They were brought by their mothers or friends before seven in the morning, to be taken care of until seven at night. They were bathed, their clothing was changed to a sort of simple uniform, and then they were turned loose outside to play, or to be amused in various ways by the faithful nurses. They were weighed regularly, examined by a physician, and

daily given the nourishing food provided by the relief committee. In fact, they had the splendid care common to the 1,900 crèches or children's shelters in Belgium. But this crèche was alone in its strange, tragic setting.

In the midst of utter ruin are swung the white cradles. In front of them, under the guardianship of gay cocks and lions, golden-haired babies are laughing and romping. Further on more ruins, desolation, silence!

IV

"THE LITTLE BEES"

I

MADAME .... has charge of a Cantine for Enfants Débiles (children below normal health) in one of the crowded quarters of Brussels. These cantines are dining-rooms where little ones come from the schools at eleven each morning for a nourishing meal. They form the chief department of the work of the "Little Bees," a society which is taking care of practically all the children, babies and older ones, in this city, who are in one way or another victims of the war. And in July, 1916, they numbered about 25,000.

The cantines have been opened in every section of the city, in a vacant shop, a

cellar, a private home, a garage, a convent—in any available, usable place. But no matter how inconvenient the building, skilful women transform it at once into something clean and cheery. In the whole of Belgium I have never seen a run-down or dirty relief center. In some the kitchen is simply a screened-off corner of the dining-room, in others it is a separate and excellently equipped quarter. I visited one crowded cantine where every day the women had to carry up and down a narrow ladder stairway all the plates and food for over 470 children. But they have so long ago ceased to think in terms of "tiredness," that they are troubled by the question suggesting it. And these are the women who have been for over nine hundred days now—shoulder to shoulder with the men—ladling out one and one-quarter million pints of soup, and cooking for, and scrubbing for, and yearning over, hundreds of thousands of more

helpless women and children, while caring always for their own families at home. If after a long walk to the cantine (they have neither motors nor bicycles) madame finds there are not enough carrots for the stew, she can not telephone—she must go to fetch whatever ingredient she wants! Each cantine has its own pantry or shop with its precious stores of rice, beans, sugar, macaroni, bacon and other food-stuffs of the C. R. B., and in addition the fresh vegetables, potatoes, eggs and meat it solicits or buys with the money gathered from door to door, the gift of the suffering to the suffering.

The weekly menus are a triumph of ingenuity; they prove what variety can be had in apparent uniformity! They are all based on scientific analysis of food values, and follow strictly physicians' instructions. One day there are more grammes of potatoes, another more grammes of macaroni in the stew; one noon

there is rice for dessert, the next phosphatine and now a hygienic biscuit—a thick, wholesome one—as big as our American cracker.

It was raining as I entered the large, modern tenement building which Madame had been fortunate enough to secure. I found on one side a group of mothers waiting for food to take home to their babies, and on the other the little office through which every child had to pass to have his ticket stamped before he could go upstairs to his dinner. This examining and stamping of cards by the thousand, day after day, is in itself a most arduous piece of work, but women accomplish it cheerfully.

On the second floor, between two large connecting rooms, I found Madame, in white, superintending the day's preparation of the tables for 1,662. That was the size of her family! Fourteen young women, with bees embroidered in the

Belgian colors on their white caps, were flying to and fro from the kitchen to the long counters in the hallway piled with plates, then to the shelves against the walls of the dining-room, where they deposited their hundreds of slices of bread and saucers for dessert. Some were hurrying the soup plates and the 1,662 white bowls along the tables, while others poured milk or went on with the bread-cutting. Several women were perspiring in the kitchens and vegetable rooms. The potato-peeling machine, the last proud acquisition which was saving them untold labor, had turned out the day's kilos of potatoes, which were already cooked with meat, carrots and green vegetables into a thick, savory stew. The big fifty-quart cans were being filled to be carried to the dining-room; the rice dessert was getting its final stirring. Madame was darting about, watching every detail, assisting in every department.

It was raining outside, but all was white, and clean, and inviting within. Suddenly there was a rush of feet in the courtyard below. I looked out the window: in the rain 1,662 children, between three and fourteen years, mothers often leading the smaller ones—not an umbrella or rubber among them—were lining up with their cards, eager to be passed by the sergeant. These kind-hearted, long-suffering sergeants kept this wavering line in place, as the children noisily climbed the long stairway—calling, pushing. One little girl stept out to put fresh flowers before the bust of the Queen. Boys and girls under six crowded into the first of the large, airy rooms, older girls into the second, while the bigger boys climbed to the floor above. With much chattering and shuffling of sabots they slid along the low benches to their places at the long, narrow tables. The women hurried between the wiggling

rows, ladling out the hot, thick soup. The air was filled with cries of "Beaucoup, Mademoiselle, beaucoup!" A few even said "Only a little, Mademoiselle." Everybody said something. One tiny, golden-haired thing pleaded: "You know I like the little pieces of meat best." In no time they discovered that I was new, and tried slyly to induce me to give them extra slices of bread, or bowls of milk.

In this multitude each was clamoring for individual attention, and for the most part getting it. Very little ones were being helped to feed themselves; second portions of soup were often given if asked for. Madame seemed to be everywhere at once, lifting one after another in her arms to get a better look at eyes or glands. Her husband, a physician of international reputation, was in the little clinic at the end of the hall, weighing and examining those whose turn it was to go to him that day. Later he came out and

passed up and down the rows to get an impression of the general condition of this extraordinary family. When for a moment husband and wife stood together in the middle of the vast room, they seemed with infinite solicitude to be gathering all the 1,662 in their arms—their own boy is at the front. And all the time the 1,662 were rapidly devouring their bread and soup.

Then began the cries of "Dessert, Mademoiselle, dessert!" Tired arms carried the 1,662 soup plates to the kitchen, ladled out 1,662 portions of rice, and set them before eager rows. Such a final scraping of spoons, such fascinating play of voice and gesture—then the last crumb eaten, they crowded up to offer sticky hands with "Merci, Mademoiselle" and "Au revoir." The clatter of sabots and laughter died away through the courtyard, and the hundreds started back to school.

The strong American physician, who had helped ladle the soup, tried to swing his arm back into position. I looked at the women who had been doing this practically every day for seven hundred days. Madame was apparently not thinking of resting—only of the next day's ration.

I discovered later that at four o'clock that afternoon she had charge of a cantine for four hundred mothers and their new babies, and that after that she visited the family of a little boy who was absent, according to the children, because his shirt was being washed.

All attempts to express admiration of this beautiful devotion are interrupted by the cry, "Oh, but it is you—it is America that is doing the astonishing thing—we *must* give ourselves, but you need not. Your gift to us is the finest expression of sympathy the world has known."

II

Before Madame ... was made director of the cantine for 1,662, she had charge of one in a still poorer quarter of the city. I went to look for it on Assumption Day, the day of the Ascent of the Blessed Virgin. I knew the street, and as usual, the waiting line of children in front told the number. Scrubbed cheeks, occasional ribbon bows and cheap embroidery flounces showed the attempt of even these very poor mothers to celebrate their fête day. Throughout the city, those fortunate enough to be called Mary were being presented with flowers, which since the war have been sold at extremely low prices, for the flowers still grow for Belgium, who supplied the markets of Europe before she was besieged.

From early morning we had seen old and young carrying great sheaves of phlox and roses, or pots of hortensia, to

some favorite Mary. But these little ones had no flowers, yet they were gay, as Belgian children invariably are—always ready with the swiftest smiles and outstretched hands, or with a pretty song if one asks for it. Little tots of three know any number of the interminable chansons familiar in France and Belgium. They chattered and laughed, caught my hand as I went down the stairs—for this dining-quarter is below the sidewalk, in rooms that are known as "caves." I was prepared for something dark and cheerless, instead I found the whitewashed walls gay with nursery pictures and Belgian and American flags. The long tables were covered with bright red-and-white checked oilcloth. The small windows opening just above the sidewalk allowed sufficient light and air to keep everything fresh. The kitchen was immaculate—shelves for shining vessels, others for the sacks of sugar, boxes of

macaroni. On a table stood the inevitable scales—Thursday is weighing day, when one of the best physicians of Brussels examines the children, recording the weights that form the basis for judgment as to the success of the ration.

The 430 bowls of milk were already on the tables. Madame ... was hurrying about among her helpers—twelve faithful Belgian women. They had all been there since eight o'clock, for this was a *viande* day (there are three a week) and when there is meat that must be cut into little pieces for between four and five hundred children, it means an early start. Two women were still stirring (with long wooden spoons) the great tub full of savory macaroni and carrots—a test in itself for muscle and endurance. The meat was in separate kettles. The bread had been cut into over 400 portions. The phosphatine dessert (of which the children can not get enough) was already

served at a side table. The "Little Bees" originated this phosphatine dessert, which is a mixture of rice, wheat and maize—flour, phosphate of lime and cocoa. They have a factory for making it, and up to August, 1916, had turned out 638,000 kilos.

A gentleman in black frock suit and large hat came in to look about, and then went back to the lengthening line. Madame explained that he was the principal of the communal school of the quarter, and that he came every day to keep the children in order. I learned, too, that on every single day of the vacation, which had begun and was to continue until the middle of September, he and one of his teachers went to the school to distribute to all the school-children the little roll of white bread that they are allowed at eight-thirty each morning. Many of these have but little at home. This roll helps them out until the cantine meal at eleven-

thirty, which can be had only on a physician's authorization. From now on a larger meal is to be given in the schools —a joy not only to the pupils but to their teachers, who everywhere are devoting themselves to this work of saving their children. Several of the younger women helping Madame had been working wearily all the year in the professional schools, but as soon as their vacations arrived, begged to be allowed to give their time to the cantines. They were all most attractive in their white aprons and caps—most serious in their attention to the individual wants of that hungry family.

A few minutes later the principal appeared again—all was ready now. Then the little ones began to march in. They came by way of an anteroom, where they had their hands washed, if they needed washing—and most of them did—and quite proudly held them up as they passed

by us. They were of all sizes between three and fourteen. One pale little fellow was led in by his grandmother who was admitted (tho no mothers or grandmothers are supposed to come inside), because he wailed the minute she left him. It was easy to see why mothers could not be allowed, tho one was glad the rule could be broken, and that this sad, white-faced grandmother could feed her own charge. It was terrible, too, to realize what that plate of savory stew would have meant to her, and to see that she touched no morsel of it. Even if there had been an extra portion, the women could not have given it to her: the following day the street would have been filled with others, for whom there could not possibly be extra portions.

If a child is too ill to come for its dinner, a member of the family can carry it home. Practically all the cantines have a visiting nurse who investigates such

cases, and keeps the number much lower than it would otherwise be.

When I asked Madame how she was able to give so much time (from about 8 A.M. till 1 or 2 P.M. every day of the year), she smiled and shrugged her shoulders: "But that is the least one can do, the very least! One never thinks of the work, it is of the children—and we know they love us—we see them being kept alive! Some of them are getting stronger—these weaklings. What more can we wish?"

V

MRS. WHITLOCK'S VISIT

THE second time, I visited Madame's cantine with the wife of the American Minister, and I found what it meant to be the wife of the United States Minister in Belgium! From the corner above to the entrance of the court the street was lined with people. At the gateway we were met by a committee headed by the wife of the Bourgmestre of Brussels. Within the court were the hundreds of children—with many more mothers this time—all waiting expectantly, all specially scrubbed, tho no amount of scrubbing could conceal their sad lack of shoes. There were smiles

and greetings and little hands stretched out all along the line as we passed.

Inside there was no more than the usual cleanliness—for the cantines are scrupulously kept. Madame and her assistants had tiny American flags pinned to their white uniforms. In the corridors the American and Belgian flags hung together. A special permission had been obtained to take a photograph of their guest at the window.

The tables were laid, the lines began moving. As the little girls filed in, one of them came forward, and with a pretty courtesy offered Mrs. Whitlock a large bouquet of red roses. The boys followed, and their representative, struggling with shyness, recited a poem as he gave his flowers. All the children were very much imprest with this simple ceremony, and under the two flags, as the quavering little voice gave thanks to "those who were bringing them their daily bread,"

READY FOR THE CHILDREN

A "Little Bees" cantine for sub-normal children

there were no grown-ups without tears in their eyes.

American flags of one kind or another hang in all the cantines, along with pictures of President Wilson, mottos expressing thanks to America, C. R. B. flour-sacks elaborately embroidered—on all sides are attempts to express gratitude and affection.

That morning, as the Legation car turned a corner, a little old Flemish lady in a white frilled cap stept forward and clapped her hands as the American flag floated by. Men lift their hats to it, children salute it. In the shop windows one often sees it draping the pictures of the King and Queen!

This is not a tribute to the American flag alone, but also to the personality of the man who has so splendidly represented this flag and to the men who carried the American soul and its works into Belgium through the C. R. B. Belgium will

never forget its immediate debt to Brand Whitlock and to these hundreds of Americans whose personal service to this country in its darkest hour is already a matter of history. Just as Mrs. Whitlock was leaving, Madame fortunately discovered a shabby little girl who still squeezed a bedraggled bunch of white roses—and made her happy by bringing her forward to present it.

These children, as I have said, are all in need of special nourishment; they are those who have fallen by the wayside in the march, brought down by the stern repression of the food supply. One of the most striking effects of the war has been the rapid increase in tuberculosis. Many of the thousands in the cantines are the victims of "glands" or some other dread form of this disease.

However, in some respects the children of the very poor are better off than they have ever been. For the first time they

are receiving nourishing food at regular hours. And this ration, along with the training in hygiene and medical attention, is having its good effect.

One hundred and twenty-five physicians are contributing their services to the "Little Bees" in Brussels alone, where, during the first six months of 1916, infant mortality had decreased 19 per cent. It would be difficult to estimate the time given by physicians throughout the whole country, but probably half of the 4,700 are contributing practically all their time, and almost all are doing something. It is a common sight in the late afternoon to see a physician who has had a full, hard day, rushing to a cantine to examine hundreds of children. Outside the zone of military preparation, 200,000 sub-normal children of from three to seventeen years, and over 53,000 babies under three months, are on their "relief" lists, besides a large number of adults.

Outside Brussels, the cantines are conducted in much the same way as those of the "Little Bees." Committees of women everywhere are devoting themselves to the children.

VI

THE BATHTUB

WAY over in the northeast, in Hasselt, a town of 17,000 inhabitants, there is an especially interesting cantine—only one of thousands in Belgium, mind you! A year ago, when a California professor was leaving San Francisco to become a C. R. B. representative, he was offered a farewell dinner—and in the hall his hostess placed a basket, with obvious intent! The money was not for the general fund, but to be spent by him personally for some child in need.

He was assigned to Hasselt, for the Province of Limbourg, and there he very soon decided that a splendid young Belgian woman who had been giving her

whole time to nursing wounded soldiers would be the person to know which of their children was most in need of his little fund. When he proposed turning it over to her, she quite broke down at the opportunity it offered. She and her mother were living in a rather large house, but on a limited income. She would find the sick child and care for it in her own home. A few days later the professor called to see her "child"—and he found twelve! She had not been able to stop—most of them were children whose fathers were at the front. They were suffering from rickets, arrested development, paralysis, malnutrition. She was bathing them, feeding them, and following the instructions of a physician, whom she had already interested. Her fund was two hundred and fifty dollars, but in her hands it seemed inexhaustible. She added children, one after another. Then, finally, the Relief Committee

came to the support of her splendid and necessary work with its usual monthly subsidy, with which the women buy the supplies most needed from the relief shops. She is now installed in the middle of the town—with a kitchen and dining-room downstairs, and a little clinic and bathroom upstairs. The forty-six centimes (less than ten cents) a day which she received per child, enabled her to furnish an excellent meal for each. But she soon found that her children could not be built up on one meal, and she stretched her small subsidy to cover a breakfast at eight and a dinner at four to 100 children. She balances the ration, makes the daily milk tests, looks after every detail personally. Upstairs in the prized tub devoted helpers bathe the children who need washing, care for their heads, and for all the various ailments of a family of 100 sub-normal children. Because of the glycerine

it contains, soap has been put on the "non-entry" list, which makes it so expensive that the very poor are entirely without it. The price has increased 300 per cent. since the war. Incidentally, one of the reasons for the high price of butter is that it can be sold for making soap, at an extraordinary figure.

This particular tub is a tribute to the ingenuity of the present American representative—also a professor, but from farther East. Before the terrific problem of giving children enough bread and potatoes to keep them alive, bathrooms sometimes appear an unnecessary luxury. The relief committee could not furnish Mademoiselle a bathroom! But to those working with the sick and dirty children it seemed all-essential. Hasselt is not a rich town, everybody's resources had been drained—how should the money be found? Finally the C. R. B. delegate had an inspiration—there was a big

swimming-tank in Hasselt. To the people, the American representative, tho loved, is always a more or less surprizing person. If it could be announced that by paying a small sum they could see the strange American swim, everybody who had the small sum would come—he would swim for the bathroom! It was announced, and they came, and that swimming fête will go down in the annals of the town! The cantine got its bathroom, and there was enough left over to buy a very necessary baby-scales.

Mademoiselle took us to the houses where we saw the misery of mothers left with seven, nine, eleven children, in one or two little rooms. There was no wage-earner—he was at the front; or there was no work. One woman was crying as we went in. She explained that her son, "a bad one," had just been trying to take his father's boots. She pulled out from behind the basket where the twins were

sleeping under the day's washing, a battered pair of coarse, high boots. There were holes in the hob-nailed soles, there was practically no heel left. The heavy tops still testified to an original stout leather, but never could one see a more miserable, run-down-at-the-heel, leaky, and useless pair of boots. Yet to that woman they represented a fortune—there is practically no leather left in the country, and if there were, how could her man, when he came back, have the money to buy another pair, and how could he work in the fields without his boots? There were eight children—eight had died.

And she wept bitterly because of the son who had tried to take his father's boots, as she hid them behind the twin's basket. I had heard of the sword as the symbol of the honor and power of the house; in bitter reality it is the father's one pair of boots!

VII

THE BREAD IN THE HAND

I SOON came to have the curious feeling about the silent stone fronts of the houses that if I could but look through them I should see women sorting garments, women making patterns for lace, women ladling soup, painting toys, washing babies. Up and down the stairs of these inconvenient buildings they are running all day long, back and forth, day after day, seeking through a heroic cheerfulness, a courageous smile, to hold back tears.

And chiefly I was overwhelmed by the enormous quantities of food they are handling. The whole city seems turned into a kitchen—and there follows the in-

evitable question: "Where does it all come from?" The women who are doing the work connect directly with the local Belgian organizations, by the great system of decentralization, which is the keynote of the C. R. B. Just these three magic letters spell the answer to the inevitable question.

At the C. R. B. bureau I had seen the charts lining the corridors. They seemed alive, changing every day, marking the ships on the ocean, the number of tons of rice, wheat, maize or sugar expected; and how these tons count up! In the two years that have passed, 1,000,000 tons each year, meaning practically one ship every weekday in the month; 90,000 tons at one time on the Atlantic! Other charts show the transit of goods already unloaded at Rotterdam. Over 200 lighters are in constant movement on their way down the canals to the various C. R. B. warehouses, which means about

50,000 tons afloat all the time. I had seen, too, the reports of the enormous quantities of clothing brought in—4,000,000 dollars worth, almost all of it the free gift of the United States.

In the director's room were other maps showing the territory in charge of each American. Back of every cantine and its power to work stands this American, the living guaranty to England that the Germans are not getting the food, the guaranty to Germany of an equal neutrality, and to the Belgians themselves the guaranty that the gifts of the world to her, and those of herself to her own people, would be brought in as wheat through the steel ring that had cut her off. One had only to think of the C. R. B. door in the steel ring as closed, to realize the position of this neutral commission. The total result of their daily and hourly co-ordination of all this organization inside Belgium, their solitude for each class of

the population, their dull and dry calculations of protein, fat and carbohydrates, bills of lading, cars, canal boats, mills and what not, is the replenishing of the life-stream of a nation's blood.

Thus, the food dispensed by the women is part of the constantly entering mass, and between its purchase, or its receipt as gift by the C. R. B., and its appearance as soup for adults, or pudding for children, is the whole intricate structure of the relief organization. The audible music of this creation is the clatter of hundreds of typewriters, the tooting of tugs and shrieks of locomotives, but the undertones are the harmonies of devotion.

Everybody who can pay for his food must do so—it is sold at a fair profit, and it is this profit, gained from those who still have money, that goes over to the women in charge of the cantines for the purchase of supplies for the destitute.

They often supplement this subsidy through a house-to-house appeal to the people. For instance, in Brussels, the "Little Bees" are untiring in their canvass. Basket on arm, continually they solicit an egg, a bunch of carrots, a bit of meat, or a money gift. They have been able to count on about 5,000 eggs and about 2,500 francs a week, besides various other things. Naturally, the people in the poorer sections can contribute but small amounts, but it is here that one finds the most touching examples of generosity—the old story of those who have suffered and understood. One woman who earns just a franc a day and on it has to support herself and her family, carefully wraps her weekly two-centime piece (two-fifths of a cent) and has it ready when one of the "Little Bees" calls for it.

Our American Young Men

Monsieur . . ., a committee leader in the Hainaut, once said to me, "Madame, one of the big things Belgium will win in this war is a true appreciation of the character and capacity (quite aside from their idealism) of American young men.

"I'll confess," he continued, "that when that initial group of young Americans came rushing in with those first heaven-sent cargoes of wheat, we were not strongly reassured. We knew that for the moment we were saved, but it was difficult to see how these youths, however zealous and clear-eyed, were going to meet the disaster as we knew it.

"We organized, as you know, our local committees, and headed them by our Belgians of widest experience; our lawyers of fifty or sixty, our bankers, our leaders of industry. We could set all the machinery, but nothing would work unless the

Americans would stand with us. The instructions read: 'The American and your Belgian chairmen will jointly manage the relief.'

"And who came to stand with us? Who came to stand with me, for instance? You see," and he pointed to splendid broad-shouldered C. ahead of us, "that lad—not a day over twenty-eight—just about the age of my boys in the trenches, and who, heaven knows, is now almost as dear to us as they!

"But in the beginning I couldn't see it; I simply couldn't believe C. was going to be able to handle his end of our terrific problem. But day by day I watched this lad quietly getting a sense of the situation, then plunging into it, getting under it, developing an instinct for diplomacy along with his natural genius for directness and practicality that bewildered me. It has amazed us all.

"We soon learned that we need not

fear to trust ourselves to that type of character, to its adaptability and capacity, no matter how young it seemed."

Of course there have been older Americans who have brought to their Belgian co-workers equal years as well as experience, but one of the pictures I like best to remember is this of Monsieur ..., a Belgian of fifty-five or sixty, in counsel with his eager American délégué of twenty-eight. To the partnership, friendship, confidence, the Belgian added something paternal, and the American responded with a devotion one feels is lifelong.

Between the visits to mills and docks, and the grinding over accounts, orders of canal boats and warehouses, there are hours for other things. I remember one restful one spent at this same Monsieur's table—he is an excellent Latin scholar and a wise philosopher—when he and his young American friend for a time

forgot the wheat and fat in their delight to get back to Virgil and Horace.

Young D., a Yale graduate, furnished another example of these qualities Monsieur stressed. If he had been a Westerner, his particular achievement would have been less surprizing, but he came from the East.

He reached Belgium at the time of a milk crisis. We were attempting, and, in fact, had practically arranged, the plan to establish C. R. B. herds adjacent to towns, to insure a positive supply for tiny babies. The local committees went at it, but one after another came in with discouraging reports. Even their own people were often preventing success by fearing and sometimes by flatly refusing to turn their precious cows into a community herd. Then one day D., who, so far as I know, had never in his career been within speaking distance of a cow, put on something that looked like a sombrero and

swung out across his province. We had hardly had time to speculate about what he might accomplish, before he returned to announce that he had rounded up a magnificent herd, and that *his* district was ready to guarantee so much pure milk from that time on!

"What had he done, where we had failed?" asked Monsieur. "He had called a meeting of farmers in each commune, and said: 'We, the Americans, want from this commune five or ten cows for the babies of your cities. We give ourselves to Belgium, you give your cows to us. We will give them back when the war is over—if they are alive!' And he got them!" They would have given this cheerful beggar anything—these stolid old Flemish peasants.

VIII

ONE WOMAN

THE world will be incredulous when it is given the final picture of the complexity and completeness of the Belgian Relief Organization. In all the communes, all the provinces, in the capital, for over two years, groups of Belgians have been shut in their bureaux with figures and plans, matching needs with relief.

There must be bread and clothing for everybody, shelter for the homeless, soup for the hungry, food boxes for prisoners in Germany, milk for babies, special nourishment for the tubercular, orphanages and crèches for the tiny war victims, work for the idle, some means of secours

for merchants, artists, teachers and thousands of "ashamed poor"—665,000 idle workmen with their 1,000,000 dependents, 1,250,000 on the soupes, 53,000 babies and 200,000 children under normal health in the cantines—how much of the story can these figures tell?

Yet the efforts of the organization have been so continuous and comprehensive, the C. R. B. has been so steadily bringing to them the vital foodstuffs, and holding for them the guaranty of their freedom to act, that from the committee-rooms it has sometimes seemed as if there were really nothing more to be done for Belgium!

But one has only to spend a few days at the other end, to get quickly disabused of this idea! No amount of organization can truly meet the needs of the seven and a half million people of a small industrial country, suddenly and entirely cut off from all normal contact with the rest of

the world. Despite all the food that has been distributed, the resistance of the people has been lowered. Tuberculosis has seized its opportunity, and is making rapid strides. I have visited home after home where a heartbreaking courage was trying to cover up a losing struggle. Over and above all the organized "Relief," there remains an enormous task for just such splendid women as Madame . . .

Madame is the wife of a lawyer, with two sons at the front. As soon as the war broke out she organized a Red Cross center. Then the refugees came pouring into Brussels, and she felt that among them there must be many to whom it would be torture to be crowded into the big relief shelters. She said little, but by the end of August she had managed to squeeze five families in with her own. From the day the Germans abolished the Belgian Red Cross she gave her entire time to helping the homeless who had

been in comfortable circumstances before the war to some quiet corner where they might wait its end. There was never any announcement of her work, but the word spread like wildfire—many had to be turned away daily. Then she found a big home on the Boulevard, rather shabby inside, but conveniently arranged for suites of two or even three rooms. Here a considerable number of families might have space for a complete ménage; plenty of light and air, and room to cook and sleep. Before long she was housing ninety-eight, but a few of these were able to re-establish themselves, so when I visited her in September, 1916, there were sixty-five. As her own funds were limited, and fast disappearing, she had in the end to appeal to the "Relief" to subsidize this "Home."

On the first floor she had a little pantry-shop, where each family received the permitted ration of bread, sugar, bacon and

other foodstuffs. One day a woman came to her, hungry. She was a widow with two little girls, who, before the war, had earned a good salary in the post-office. Somehow she had managed to exist for two years, but now there was nothing left. She was given charge of the pantry at ten cents a day. I have seen many processions of people descending long stairways. I shall forget them. But I shall never forget this one of the refugees from the upper floors winding down the stairways at the shop hour, with their pathetic plates and bowls ready for the bacon and bread that made living possible. They could, perhaps, add vegetables and fruit, or an egg or two, to the ration to piece out the meal. On the lowest shelf of this miniature shop were a few dozen cans of American corn, which even yet the people have not learned to like. Having been brought up to regard corn in all forms as fit only for cattle and

chickens, even disaster can not convince them that it is a proper food for man!

Later we went upstairs to visit some of the apartments. They were bright and clean, with cheery flower-pots on all the window-sills. Every one showed a fine appreciation of what was done for him by making the most of all he had; an attitude quite different from that of many less used to comfort, less intelligent, who neither hesitate to demand charity, nor to complain of what they receive. Each family had a small, practical stove, which served for both cooking and heating.

One family of eight was content in its two rooms. They had had a copper shop and a pension at Dinant; were very comfortably off, when, suddenly, Dinant was struck. All their property was in flames, men were being shot, their own grandmother, eighty-one years old, had her leg broken, and, terror-stricken, they fled with her up and down hill, over rocks and

through brush till they reached Namur, and finally arrived at Brussels where they heard of Madame's "Home." The grandmother, whose leg is mended but still crooked, was sitting in front of the red geraniums at a window, knitting socks. She knits one pair a week and receives five cents for each pair from the clothing committee. The young girls help Madame in various ways; the father tries to work in copper, but if he earns fifty cents a week, considers himself lucky. The particular struggle for this family is to get eggs for the grandmother, who can not get along on the bacon and bread. Eggs cost ten cents each. Happily, this is a kind of situation that "special funds" from the United States have often relieved. Everybody was courageous, trying simply to hold on till the terrible war should be ended and he could go back to rebuild something on the ruins of his home.

There was another Dinant ménage next

door, but a ménage for one. I quickly read this poor woman's story on the walls. On one was tacked a large picture of Dinant, beautiful, smiling, winding along the river, as in July, 1914. Above it was the photograph of her husband, shot in August; on the other wall a handsome son in uniform. He was at the front. She stopt peeling her potatoes to go over again those horrible days. They had been so well off, so happy, father, mother and son. When they saw their city in flames, they were too bewildered, too terror-stricken to realize what it meant. Her husband left to help restore a bridge —he did not return. The son hurried to follow his King; she somehow reached Brussels.

There was a fine young chap of about fifteen, whose father had been killed at Manceau sur Sambre. He and his mother had found this haven, but now she was in the hospital undergoing a capital opera-

tion. Madame was trying to arrange a special diet for her on her return. They had been in very comfortable circumstances; now everything was gone.

And so it was—the same story, and from all parts of Belgium. They had come from Verviers, Aerschot, Dinant, from Termonde and Ypres—the striking thing was the courage, the gentleness, the fine spirit of all.

This "Home," as I said, has now been subsidized, but along with it Madame still carries on another admirable work entirely on her own responsibility. Some friends help her, but she really lives from day to day! On the ground floor of this same building she has a restaurant, also known only as the word passes from mouth to mouth, where any one may come for a good dinner at noon. There is no limit to what one may pay, but the charge is a franc, or twenty cents. The majority pay less.

It has quite the atmosphere of one of the little Paris restaurants of the Latin quarter—two adjoining rooms bright with flowers and colored cloths and gay china, separated from the kitchen only by screens. It is frequented chiefly by artists and teachers, some young girls from the shops, and a few business men. Madame does not go from table to table as the Paris host does, greeting his guests, but they come to her table to shake hands and chat for a minute. They linger over their coffee—there is the general atmosphere of cheer and *bien être*. And what this means in this time of gloom to the sixty or more who gather there daily!

Young girls of the families of the refugees serve the meals. The cook, herself a refugee, works for twenty francs a month.

I said any one might come, but that is, of course, not exact. Any one may ask to come, but he must prove to Madame

that he needs to come. After he explains his situation, she has ways of checking up this information and deciding herself whether the need is a real one. The dinner consists of soup, a meat and vegetable dish, and dessert, with beer or coffee.

I was looking over the meal tickets and noticed that while most of them were unstamped (the one franc ones) a good number had distinguishing marks. Then I learned that if a person was unable to pay a franc for this meal, he might have it for fifteen or even ten cents, and his ticket was stamped accordingly. I found one ticket with no stamp, but with the "o" of "No" blotted out. This might be chance, but after finding a half-dozen or more with this same ink blot, I suspected a meaning. And the explanation revealed the spirit of Madame's work. "Yes," she said, "there is a meaning. There are some so badly off that they can pay nothing; to save them the pain of

having to look at, and to have others look at, a stamp registering this misery, I do not stamp their tickets, but, since I must keep count, I blot that little 'o,' which at once suggests 'zero' to me!"

Choosing at random, I found registered for one day in July, 1916:

1 dinner at 1 franc, 10 centimes.
58 dinners at 1 franc.
43 dinners at 75 centimes (15 cents).
10 dinners at 50 centimes.
4 dinners at 0.

IX

THE CITY OF THE CARDINAL

UNQUESTIONABLY the Belgian above all others the Germans would rid themselves of if they could, is Cardinal Mercier. He is the exalted Prince of the Church, but in the hour of decision, he stept swiftly down and, with a ringing call to courage, took his place with the people. Ever since that day he has helped them to stand united, defiant, waiting the day of liberation. Others have been silenced by imprisonment or death, but the greatest power has not dared to lay hands on the Cardinal. He is the voice, not only of the Church, but of Belgium heartening her children.

Malines has her cantines and soupes

and ouvroirs, all the branches of secours necessary to a city that was one of the centers of attack; but these are not the most interesting things about Malines. It is above all as the city of the Cardinal that she stands forth in this war. Her "œuvre" has been to give moral and spiritual secours, not only to her own people, but to those of every part of Belgium.

Since under the "occupation" the press has naturally been "controlled," this secours has been distributed chiefly through the famous letters of the Cardinal sent to priests to be re-read to their people. We remember the thrill with which the first one was read in America. After the war there will be pilgrimages to the little room where it was printed. I had the privilege of having it shown me by that friend of the Cardinal who was the printer of the first letter, and whose brother was at this time a prisoner in

Germany for having printed the second. The room was much as it had been left after the search; books were still disarranged on their shelves, papers and pamphlets heaped in confusion on the tables. The red seals with which the Germans had closed the keyholes had been broken, but their edges still remained. Standing in the midst of the disarray, remembering that the owner had already been six months in a German prison, and looking out on the shattered façade at the end of the garden, I realized, at least partly, another moment of the war.

This quickening secours, then, is distributed chiefly by letter, but continually by presence and speech in Malines itself, and occasionally in other parts of the country. On the 21st of July, 1916, the anniversary of the independence of Belgium, all Brussels knew that the Cardinal was coming to celebrate high mass in

Sainte Gudule. The mass was to begin at 11 o'clock, but at 9.30 practically every foot of standing-room in the vast cathedral was taken. In the dimness a great sea of people waited patiently, silently, the arrival of their leader. Occasionally a whispered question or rumor flashed along the nave. "He has come!" "He has been prevented!" There was a tacit understanding that there should be no demonstration—the Cardinal himself had ordered it. Every one was trying to control himself, and yet, as the air grew thicker, and others fought their way into the already packed transepts, one felt that anything might happen! Almost every person had a bit of green ribbon (color of hope) or an ivy leaf (symbol of endurance) pinned to his coat. The wearing of the national colors was strictly forbidden, but the national spirit found another way: green swiftly replaced the orange, black and red.

We all knew that this meant trouble for Brussels, and the fact that the shops (which had all been ordered to keep open this holiday) were carrying on a continuous comedy at the expense of the Germans, did not help matters. Their doors were open, to be sure, but in many, the passage was blocked by the five or six employees who sat in stiff rows with bows of green ribbon in their buttonholes, and indescribable expressions on their faces. In the biggest chocolate shop, the window display was an old pail of dirty water with a slimsy rag thrown near it. There was no person inside but the owner, who stood beside the cash register in dramatic and defiant attitude, smoking a pipe. There were crowds in front of the window which displayed large photographs of the King and Queen, draped with the American flag. Another shop had only an enormous green bow in the window. Almost every one took some

part in the play. Not a Belgian entered a shop, and if a German was brave enough to, he was usually made the victim of his courage. One was delighted to serve him, but, unfortunately, peaches had advanced to ten francs each, or something of the sort!

Finally, after an hour and a half, a priest made an announcement, which from our distance we misunderstood. We thought he said that the mass would be celebrated, but unfortunately not by Monseigneur, who had been detained. A few of us worked our way, inch by inch, to the transept door, and out into the street. There I found an excited group running around the rear of the cathedral to the sacristy-door, and, when I reached it, I learned the Cardinal had just passed through.

For no particular reason I waited there, and before long the door was partly opened by an acolyte, who was apparently

expecting some one. He saw me and agreed that I might enter if I wished, for was I not an American to whom all Belgium is open? So I slipt in and found room to stand just behind the altar screen where all through the celebration I could watch the face of the Cardinal—a face at once keen and tender, strong, fearless, devout: one could read it all there. He was tall, thin, dominating, a heroic figure, in his gorgeous scarlet vestments, officiating at the altar of this beautiful Gothic cathedral.

The congregation remained silent, three or four fainting women were carried out, that was all. Then the Cardinal mounted the pulpit at the further end of the nave to deliver his message, the same message he had been preaching for two years—they must hold themselves courageous, unconquered, with stedfast faith in God and in their final liberation. Tears were in the eyes of many, but there was no crying out.

From the pulpit he came back to the catafalque erected in the middle of the nave for the Belgian soldiers dead in battle. It represented a great raised coffin, simply and beautifully draped with Belgian flags, veiled in crêpe. Tall, flaming candles surrounded it. As the Cardinal approached, the dignitaries of the city, who had been occupying seats of honor below the altar, marched solemnly down and formed a circle about the catafalque. Then the Cardinal read the service for the dead. The dim light of the cathedral, the sea of silent people, the memorial coffin under the flag and lighted by tall candles, the circle of those chosen to represent the city, the sad-faced Cardinal saying the prayers for those who had died in defense of the flag that now covered them—was it strange that as his voice ceased and he moved slowly toward the sacristy-door by which he was to depart, the overwhelming tide of emo-

tion swept barriers, and "Vive le Roi!" "Vive Monseigneur!" echoed once more from these ancient walls! We held our breath. Men were pressing by me whispering, "What shall we do? We have necessity to cry out—after two years, we *must* cry out!" The Cardinal went straight forward, looking neither to the right nor the left, the tears streaming down his cheeks.

Outside, to pass from the rear of the cathedral to the Archbishop's palace, he was obliged to cross the road. As I turned up this road to go back to the main portal, the crowd came surging down, arms outthrust, running, waving handkerchiefs and canes, pushing aside the few helpless Belgian police, quite beyond control, and shouting wildly now, "Vive le Roi!" and "Vive Monseigneur!" I was able to struggle free only after the gate had closed on the Cardinal.

This was the day when in times of

peace all the populace brought wreaths to the foot of the statue erected in honor of the soldiers who died for the independence of Belgium. The Germans had placed guards in the square and forbidden any one to go near it. So all day long throngs of people, a constant, steady procession marched along the street beyond, each man lifting his hat, women often their green parasols, as soon as they came in view of their statue. All these things, I repeat, did not help Brussels in the matter of the demonstration at the cathedral. And a few days later a posted notice informed her that she had been fined 1,000,000 marks!

But the people had seen their Cardinal —they had received their spiritual secours—he had brought heavenly comfort to their hearts, put new iron in their blood. They had dared to cry just once their loyalty to him and to their King, and they laughed at the 1,000,000 marks!

X

THE TEACHERS

ONE afternoon I happened by a communal school in another crowded quarter of Brussels, and, tho it was vacation, and I knew the principal had been sadly overworked for two years and ought to be in the country, I decided to knock at the bureau to see if he were in.

I had my answer in the corridor, where rows of unhappy mothers and miserable fathers were waiting to see him. Inside there were more. He was examining a little girl with a very bad eye; and I realized why there could be no vacation for the principal!

As I sat there, I heard the noise of

marching in the court below, and when I asked what it was, he opened the window for me to see. There were 720 children between six and fourteen years, gaily tramping round and round under the trees, making their "promenade" before the 4 o'clock "repas scolaire" (school children's repast) which the Relief Organization is now trying to furnish to each of the 1,200,000 children in the free schools of Belgium who may need it—incidentally at an outlay of $2,500,000 a month.

Over 8,500 children in the sixty communal schools of Brussels proper receive this dinner. It is quite distinct from the eleven o'clock meal furnished at the cantines for children below normal health—they may have both—and it is served in the school building. Naturally the school-teachers are carrying a large share in this stupendous undertaking.

For the children, the "repas" is the

great event of the day, and, since the vacation, they gather long before the hour. One sees, too, hundreds of little ones on the sidewalks before the Enfants Débiles dining-rooms, as early as 8 A.M., clutching their precious cards and waiting already for their eleven o'clock potatoes and phosphatine.

This school is also a communal soup center, tho the teachers have nothing to do with the distribution. Every day from 2,500 to 3,000 men and women line up—worn, white enamel pitchers in one hand, cards in the other, to receive the family ration of soup and bread.

As I passed one morning, I saw a little bare-legged girl sitting on a doorstep opposite. Her mother had evidently left her to guard their portion, and she sat huddled up against the tall, battered pitcher full of steaming soup, her little arms tight about four round loaves—which meant many brothers and sisters.

The father was in the trenches. She sat there, a slim, wistful little thing, guarding the soup and bread, the picture of what war means to women and children.

Monsieur was particularly happy because he had just succeeded in sending fifteen children, who very much needed to be built up, to the seacoast for fifteen days. It is his hope to establish homes, in the country so far as possible, which shall be limited to from thirty to forty children.

He has continually to arrange, too, for the care of those who may not be in truth orphans, but who belong to the thousands of wretched little ones set adrift by the war. I saw one little boy who had been found all alone in a most pitiful plight beside a gun, in one of the devastated districts. If his parents are still living, no one has yet succeeded in tracing them.

That morning an old uncle had begged Monsieur to take charge of his nephew

and niece; he had not a penny left, they must starve unless something were done for them. Some months before, the father had been wounded at the front, and the mother had foolishly hurried away to try to reach him, leaving the children with her brother. Months had gone by—he had had no word from any one—and now he was quite at the end of his resources. And so it was with case after case. Something *must* be done!

Besides being the section kitchen and dining-room, this school has become a social center. Every Sunday afternoon the children are invited to gather there to have a good time. They are taught to play games, each is given a bonbon, a simple sweet of some sort—"nothing of the kind to encourage luxury!" They are occupied, happy, and kept off the streets and out of homes made miserable through lack of employment.

We see, then, that "every day" means

literally *every* day, and we realize how arduous is the task of the thousands of devoted teachers who are standing between the war and those who would otherwise be its victims.

And as they tell us over and over again that the one thing that makes them able to stand is their confidence in the love and sympathy of the United States, we begin to realize our responsibility. It is not only that the wheat and cloth are essential, the encouragement of the presence of even the few (forty to fifty) Americans is the *great* necessity!

At 8.30 the next morning I visited one of the "Jardins d'Enfants"—schools for children between two and a half and six years of age. There were the teachers already busy in that new department of their work—the war-food department; 460 tiny tots were being given their first meal of the day—a cup of hot cocoa, and,

during that month, a little white bread bun. No American can understand what this single piece of *white* bread means to a French or Belgian child. I am sure that if a tempting course dinner were set at one side, and a slice of white bread at the other, he would not hesitate to choose the bread. It is white bread that they all beg for, tho the brown war bread made from flour milled at 82 per cent. is really very palatable, and superior to the war bread of other countries.

A sheaf of letters sent from a school in Lille to thank the C. R. B. director for the improved brown (not nearly white) bread gave me my first impression of the all-importance of the color and quality of the bread.

Amélie B. wrote:

"Before May 5, 1915, we had to eat black bread, which we preferred to make into flowers of all sorts as souvenirs of the war! But after that date we have

had the good, light bread—so eatable. It is for this we thank you."

Another says:

"Since we have had the *good* bread the happiest people are the mothers, who before had to let their "chers petits" suffer from hunger, because their delicate stomachs would not digest the bad, black bread."

Further:

"The mothers of little children wept with joy and blest you, as they went to get their good, light bread."

One little girl wrote:

"When on the 5th of May, 1915, maman returned with the new bread, and we all ran to taste it, we found it good. The bread we had been eating long months had been dark and moist. Further, rice had been our daily food. It is without doubt to show your gratitude to the French, who went to drive the English away from you in 1783, that you

have thought to soften our suffering. Merci! Merci! Many died because of that bad bread, and many more should have died, had you not come to our aid with the good bread."

Another little girl writes:

"If ever in the future America is in need, France will not forget the good she has done and will reach a hospitable hand to her second country, who has saved her unhappy children. It is you who have made it possible for all mothers to give bread to their children. Without the rice and beans, what would have become of us! You have helped us to have coal and warm clothing against the cold. In the name of all the mothers we thank you, and all the little children send you a great kiss of thanks."

The babies had all finished their cocoa and buns, so I went to the Girls' Technical Training School in the neighborhood. It was having a particularly hard

time because of the lack of materials and of opportunity to sell the articles made by the children. But two wonderful women—one the director, the other the art teacher—were courageously fighting to keep things going.

The pupils are largely from poor families. When they were going through the beautiful figures of their gymnasium exercise for me, I saw that the bloomers were mostly made of odds and ends of cloth. The shoes, too, quickly told the tale—all sorts of substitutes for leather, patched woolen shoes or slippers, wooden soles with cloth tops, clogs.

In the room for design I was greeted with most cordial smiles as Madame introduced me as her friend from America, the country which meant hope to them. Then happened swiftly one of the things it is difficult to prevent—the shouting in one breath of "Vive le Roi!" and "Vive l'Amérique!" Who would doubt that a

good part of the joy of shouting "Vive l'Amérique" comes from the opportunity it gives them to couple with it the cry of their hearts, "Vive la Belgique!"

By the time we returned to her bureau, Madame trusted me entirely, and explained that this was the center of a kind of "Assistance Discrète" she had established for her girls and their families. She opened several cabinets, and showed me what they had made to help one another. Certain women have been contributing materials—old garments, bits of cloth, trimming for hats, all of which have been employed to extraordinary advantage. What struck me most were the attractive little babies' shirts, made from the upper parts of worn stockings.

Madame opened a paper sack and showed me nine hard-boiled eggs that were to be given to the weaker girls, who most needed extra nourishment that day.

Her most precious possession was a

record of the gifts of the pupils and their friends for this "Assistance Discrète." It is a list of contributions of a few centimes, or a franc or two, given as thank offerings for some blessing; oftenest for recovery from illness, or for good news received. It showed, too, that the children had been bringing all the potato peelings from home, to be sold as food for cattle. Sometimes a girl brought as much as twenty-eight centimes (over five cents) worth of peelings. But in May, 1916, the potato peelings stopt—they were not having potatoes at home.

XI

GABRIELLE'S BABY

BEFORE the war Madame was very close to the Queen. She lived in our quarter of Brussels; we became friends. And how generous the friendship between a Belgian and an American can be, only the members of the Commission for Relief truly know! It is swift and complete.

I had been in Brussels five months when she said to me one day:

"My dear, I understand only too well the difficulties of your position—the guaranty you gave on entering. As you know, I have never once suggested that you carry a note for me, or bring a message—tho I have seen you starting in your car behind your blessed little white

flag for the city of my daughter and my grandchildren! Nor have I," she laughed, with the swift play so typical of the Belgian mind, "once hinted at a pound of butter or a potato! But lately I have been suffering so many, many fears, that I am tempted just to ask if you think this would be wrong for you—if it would, forget that I asked it: I have a relation who has always been closer to me than a brother—we were brought up together. He is eighty-two now, and, at the beginning of the war, was living near X in Occupied France. He was important in his district, his name is known. Now, if I should merely give you that name, and, when you next see your American delegate from that district, you should speak it, might it not be possible that he would recognize it, and could tell you if my dear, dear M. is suffering, or if he is yet able to care for himself? Would that be breaking your agreement?"

As she stood there—intelligence, distinction speaking from all her person—fearfully putting this pitiful question, I experienced another of those maddening moments we live through in Belgium. One swiftly doubts one's reason—the situation—everything! The world simply can not be so completely lost as it seems!

Mercifully this would not be breaking any promise; and I begged for the name.

But even then I was rather hopeless that our American would know. In the North of France he must live with his German officer; he is not free to mingle with the French people.

Thursday, conference day, came, when all the little white flags rush in from their provinces, bringing our splendid American men—their faces stern, strained, but with that beautiful light in them that testifies they are giving without measure the best they have to others.

Never will any one, who has experienced it, forget the thrill he felt when he saw those fifteen cars with their forty-two men rushing up, one after the other to 66, rue des Colonies, nor the line of them all day on the curb with their fluttering white flags carrying the red C. R. B.! There were no other cars to be seen. Each person, as he passed, knew that these fifteen white flags meant wheat and life to 10,000,000 people.

As I stood there I heard a band. I looked up the street and saw the German soldiers goose-stepping before their guard mount. This happens every morning, just a square above our offices. The white flags and the goose-step—they pretty much sum up the situation!

I hurried inside, hoping fervently to hear the longed-for answer, as I put the name and my question.

But the name was strange to S., he

could tell me nothing, tho he felt sure that by keeping his ears open that week, he might learn something.

How often through those days I thought of these two, caught in this war-night of separation. For two and a half years neither had been able to call across it even the name of the other. And then of the word thrown into the night with hope and prayer!

On the next meeting day, as he hurried toward me, I could see from S.'s face that he had news. "Yes," he said eagerly, "he is still there, he draws his ration—he is not suffering from want, he has enough left to pay for his food. But when he heard that somebody would possibly carry this news to his dearest living relation, he cried: 'Oh! Would it not be possible to do just one thing more! I am eighty-two; I may die before this terrible war is ended. In pity will not somebody tell me

before I die if any of my nieces has had a little baby, or if any one of them is going to have a little baby?'

"And now," S. said, "you and I know that if the Relief stops, we've got to find out for that poor old man that there is a baby!"

And I went about it. On Thursday, when he rushed over to me I could call: "Yes, there *is* one! It's Gabrielle's! A little girl, five months old and doing beautifully!"

"Hurrah!" he shouted, and hurried back to his tons and calories.

It is four months since then, and I do not know if there are any more babies, or if that old gentleman of a distinguished house has had any other than this single connection with the loved ones of this family in over two and a half years.

XII

THE "DROP OF MILK"

BELGIUM is succoring her weak children, but she is going deeper than this: she is trying to prevent weak children. All through the country there are cantines where an expectant or young mother without means may receive free a daily dinner, consisting usually of a thick soup, a meat or egg dish with vegetables, a dessert with lactogenized cream, and a measure of milk. Light service, like the peeling of vegetables, is often required in return. The mother may come as early as three months before the birth of her child, and if she is still nursing it, may continue nine months after its birth. About 7,000 mothers are receiving this dinner, and 6,000 more come to the

affiliated consultation cantines for advice.

Of course, there are always those who can not nurse their children, or who can carry them through but a short period, when the question of pasteurized milk becomes all-important. The "Goutte de Lait" (drop of milk) sections meet this problem by offering the necessary feedings of pure milk. The mother may pay for the bottles, and have them delivered, or she may, if necessitous, receive them free by calling or sending for them.

In Antwerp, where this work has assumed unusual proportions, a big-hearted president of the Belgian Provincial Committee got permission to purchase 100 cows in Holland and to hold them without danger of requisition. He installed a model dairy on his place, and now gives all the baby cantines pure milk. He is always most anxious to finish his arduous day's work at the bureau, so that he may return to his dairy, ex-

A MEAL FOR YOUNG MOTHERS

amine the milk tests, and review his fine herd. One of his daughters, in addition to hours spent in the cantines, takes the entire responsibility of the management of this dairy. Other towns are less fortunate, and must struggle continually to get the milk they require. There is a beautiful development of the work of a "Goutte de Lait" in Hasselt, in a cantine occupying part of a maternity hospital. There they have an admirable equipment for sterilization and pasteurization. At 7 o'clock in the morning I found the women directors already busy with the preparation of the milk. Each feeding has its separate bottle, and may be kept sealed till the baby receives it. After seven months, white phosphatine, a mixture of the flour of wheat, rice and corn, with salt, sugar and phosphate of lime, is furnished; at fourteen months, cocoa is added, and after two years, soup and bread.

I happened to arrive on the weekly weighing day. One hundred mothers were gathered in a large, cheery room, their babies in their arms, many of them gay in the pretty bonnets the doctor's wife had made for those who had the best records. They passed, a few at a time, into the smaller room where the doctor and his wife examined, weighed, counseled, while two assistants registered important details; the three young nurses generally aided the mothers and their chiefs.

Then I was shown an adjoining room, where, in the corners, there were heaps of little white balls rolled in wax paper. From a distance they looked more than anything else like tiny popcorn balls. What could they mean? I took one in my hand and saw that they meant that the most precious prize that can be offered a Belgian mother to-day is a tiny ball of white lard! With the more

ignorant, this prize-system is the swiftest means of opening the way. The doctor laughed as he recounted his struggle with one obstinate woman, who argued stoutly that because the cow is a great, strong creature, while she herself is but small and frail, undoubtedly its milk would be infinitely more strengthening to her child than her own! Where argument failed, the prize convinced. If a mother can nurse her baby but neglects to, she is forced to feed it regularly before some member of the committee. Nurses visit all the homes registered.

The attempt is being made everywhere to induce mothers who are not actually in want, to enroll in these cantines, while paying for their food, that they may have the benefit of the pure milk and the physician's care. The "Relief" is not counting the cost of this fundamental work—the baby cantines are the promise of the future. They are already closely watch-

ing the development of 53,000 babies. The educational value alone can not be measured; women who had not the faintest conception of the simplest laws of hygiene are being trained, forced to learn, because their own and their children's food can come to them only from the hand of their teacher. While the war has brought unutterable misery, it has also brought extraordinary opportunity, and Belgium is seizing this opportunity wherever she can.

XIII

LAYETTES

AND babies must be clothed, as well as fed! I visited one of the Brussels layette centers with the C. R. B. American advisory physician, whose interest in children had brought him at once face to face with what women are doing to save them. We went to a little cantine consisting of a room and anteroom on the ground floor, and, I might add, the sidewalk—for before we reached it we saw the line of hatless mothers with their tiny babies wrapt in shawls in their arms, waiting their turn. This was a depot where they might receive the articles for the lying-in period and clothing for babies under six months of age. We passed through the anteroom, where

a number sat nursing their babies (young mothers mostly, and many of them pretty, into the distributing-room.

Here we found three directors very busy at their tables with the record-cards, books and other materials of their organization, and three younger women rapidly sorting out the tiny bibs, slips and sheets heaped high on the counters along the walls. From the miscellaneous piles they produced the neat little layettes—each a complete wardrobe for an expectant or young mother, and comprising 4 squares, 2 swaddling cloths, 3 fichus, 4 brassieres, 2 shirts, 2 bands, 2 pair socks, 2 bonnets, 3 bibs, 1 hooded cloak. The packages for children from three to six months held 3 squares, 2 pantaloons, 2 bibs, 2 fichus, 2 shirts, 2 brassieres, 2 dresses.

As the mothers came in, the babies were carefully weighed and examined, the records added to, through direct,

effective questioning—always gentle and encouraging. The young women turned over the needed garments, with advice about their use, chiefly regarding cleanliness. To support this advice, they attempted to have the materials white as far as possible.

When I asked what they most needed, they said, "Cradles, Madame, cradles. We could place fifty a week in this cantine alone, and white materials for sheets and blankets—and oh, hundreds of yards of rubber sheeting or its equivalent!" For very evident reasons, the C. R. B. is not allowed to bring in rubber materials of any kind. Many mothers, as the babies arrive, appeal for beds for the older children and for mattresses for themselves. "We can still get ticking in Brussels if we have the money, but nothing to stuff it with."

Every morning since the beginning of the war these women have been there, on

their feet most of the time—sorting, arranging packages of garments, and keeping in their minds and hearts the hundreds of mothers and babies who depend on them. They often visit the homes after cantine hours. Madame smiled as she explained the necessity of a personal investigation of each case. "For instance," she said, "if at the children's cantine I gave a youngster a pair of shoes simply because he seemed to have none, and without personally proving that he had none, I should undoubtedly have an entire barefoot family the next day!"

It was with this particular kind of work that the Petites Abeilles or "Little Bees" started five years before the war. A group of young women banded together to help children, and organized centers in Brussels for the distribution of needed clothing. Their efforts at once won the enthusiasm of the people. Poets wrote songs to "The Little Bees," the Queen

and the adored Princess Marie-José were their patronesses—they were probably the most popular organization of their kind in Belgium.

Then the war came, and the mothers quickly took charge. They established a vast home for refugees, where they housed over 5,000. Later they appealed to the Relief Committee to be allowed to develop their work to meet the terrible emergency. Their offer was only too gladly accepted, and one after another cantine for feeding, as well as clothing, was opened in the various sections of the city; where to-day practically all the work for the children is carried on by these wonderful "Little Bees" and their mothers. By July, 1916, their 124 Brussels sections were caring for about 25,000 children, and between 2,500 and 3,000 women were giving a great part of their time to the work. Social barriers disappeared. All classes rallied to the need.

Four hundred telephone girls out of work were doing their best, side by side with countesses.

As we were leaving, Madame explained that the woman who founded this particular cantine was a prisoner in Germany. The three beautiful young girls sorting the layettes were the daughters, carrying forward their mother's work. I was to learn that almost invariably at some moment of my visit, the veil would be withdrawn and the tragedy revealed.

XIV

THE SKATING-RINK AT LIÉGE

TO the world Liége is the symbol of Belgium's courage. During eleven days her forts withheld an overwhelming force, reckless of its size or her own unpreparedness, determined to save the national integrity of Belgium. And well Belgium knew to what point she could count on the brave Liégeois; through all her troubled history, they had been the ardent champions of her freedom.

This beautiful city on the Meuse escaped the ruin visited on other parts of her province. In fact, all the four largest cities of Belgium escaped, in each case a smaller neighboring town, especially picturesque, stands as an example of de-

struction and warning. Belgians ask if it was not with the obvious intent of cowing the nearby capital, that Dinant was made an example to Namur, Nimy to Mons, Louvain to Brussels? They point out that tho only the ghost of lovely Visée remains, Liége itself has lost but about 100 buildings. After the final inevitable surrender of her forts, the attacking army passed on, leaving her under powerful control. But tho the material damage was small, as the populous center of a great industrial region, this city was one of the first to realize the distress that followed the occupation and isolation of Belgium. One by one her famous firearm factories and glass mills closed their doors, and poured their thousands of workmen into the streets. In many cases the factories were dismantled, the machinery taken to Germany to make munitions. And this was happening all through the province, so that by 1915 it

counted 90,000 idle workmen (chômeurs), and in the capital alone, fully 18,000. Ordinarily (among her 180,000 inhabitants) Liége lists 43,000 skilled workmen; so for her the proportion of idle was almost one-half; with their families they represented but little less than one-quarter of the entire population. The 4,000 employed in the coal mines, which, fortunately, were able to keep open, were the one saving factor in the situation.

The question of chômage, or unemployment, is the most serious the relief organization has had to face. It has been most acute in the two Flanders; but in Antwerp, with its 25,000 idle dock hands, in the highly industrial Hainault, in Namur and Brabant, as well as in Liége, there have been special circumstances developing particular difficulties. Over 665,000 workmen without work, representing millions of dependents, would present a sufficiently critical problem to

a country not at war. One can imagine what it means to a country every square foot of which is controlled by an enemy so hated that the conquered would risk all the evils of continued non-employment rather than have any of its people serve in any way the ends of the invader. Better roads, better railways, mean greater facility for the Germans.

None of the leaders I have talked with have been satisfied with the system evolved, but no one has yet been able to substitute a better.

A scheduled money allowance for the chômeur was quickly adopted, but as a friend from Tournai said, this enabled a man simply to escape complete starvation, but not to live. Three francs a week for the workman, one franc and a half for his wife, fifty centimes for each of his children, or one dollar and ten cents a week for a family of four, just about the war price of one pound of butter or meat!

Obviously the chômeur and his family must draw on the soupes and cantines, and this they do. They form a considerable part of the one and one-quarter millions of the soup-lines. Every province has tried to reduce its number of unemployed by providing a certain amount of work on roads and public utilities. Luxembourg has been conspicuous in this attempt, reclaiming swamps, rebuilding sewer systems and roadways, employing about 10,000 men. In fact, Luxembourg has so far almost avoided a chômeur class.

Throughout the country, too, the clothing and lace committees are furnishing at least partial employment to women. In a lesser way various local relief committees are most ingenious in inventing opportunities to give work. In the face of the whole big problem they often seem insignificant, but every community is heartened by even the smallest attempt to

restore industry. I have seen fifty men given the chance to buy their own food by means of a "soles work." All the needy of the village were invited to bring their worn shoes to have a new kind of wooden sole put on for the winter, and the men were paid by the committee for putting them on. In one city the owner of a closed firearm factory has opened a toy works where 100 men and 30 women are kept busy carving little steel boxes and other toys. If these articles could be exported, such establishments would quickly multiply, but every enterprize must halt at the grim barrier.

In Liége I came upon a most picturesque attempt at an individual solution. I had been much interested in Antwerp and Charleroi and other cities, in the "Dîner Economique" or "Dîner Bourgeois," conducted by philanthropic women. These are big, popular restaurants, where because of a subsidy from

the relief committee, and because almost all of the service is contributed, a meal can be served for less than it costs. For a few centimes, about ten cents, usually, one may have a good soup, a plate with meat and vegetables, and sometimes a dessert.

Wonderful Belgian women come day after day, month after month, to serve the thousands that flock to these centers that save them from the soup-lines. If they can add this dinner to their relief ration, they can live. And they are not "accepting charity!" The dining-rooms are always attractive, often bright with flags and flowers, the women are cheery in their service. Priests, children, artists, men and women of every class sit at the tables. Once I saw a poor mother buy one dinner for herself and her two children, and fortunately, too, I saw a swift hand slip extra portions in front of the little ones. There are ten such restau-

rants in Antwerp (five conducted by the Catholics, and five by the Liberals) that serve on an average over 10,000 dinners a day. The one in Charleroi serves from 400 to 900 daily.

In Liége the work is consolidated. I found the once popular skating-rink turned into a mighty restaurant, gay with American bunting. The skating floor was crowded with tables, the surrounding spectators' space made convenient cloak-rooms, the one-time casual buffet was a kitchen in deadly earnest, supplying dinners to about 4,000 daily.

When I arrived, there was already a line outside; each person had to present a card on entering to prove him a citizen of Liége. If he could, he paid 75 centimes (15 cents) for his dinner. If unable to, by presenting a special card from the Relief Committee, he might receive it for 60, or even 30 centimes—a little more than 5 cents.

Inside the tables were crowded, sixty-five women were hurrying between them and back and forth to the directors who stood at a long counter in front of the kitchen, serving the thousands of portions, of soup, sausage, and a kind of stew of rice and vegetables.

In the kitchen and meat and vegetable rooms there was the constant clamor of sifting, cutting, stirring, of the opening and shutting of ovens. While the sausages of the day were being hurried from the pans, the soup of the morrow was being mixed in the great caldrons; 250 men were hard at work. Somehow they did not look as tho they had been peeling carrots and stirring soup all their lives—there was an inspiring dash in their movements that prevented it seeming habitual.

The superintendent laughed: "Yes," he said, "they are chiefly railroad engineers, conductors, various workmen of

the Liége Railroad Company! I myself was an attorney for the road, and I am really more interested in this œuvre from the point of view of these men, than because of the general public it helps. Here are 250 men who are giving their best service to their country. In working for others they have escaped the curse of being forced to work for the Germans! The sixty-five women serving the 4,000 were once in the telephone service. They also offered to devote themselves to their fellow-sufferers, and they are so proud, so happy to be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with other women in this black hour."

I asked if each worker were given his dinner. "Ah! there was a problem!" he said. "The meals which we furnish for from 30 to 75 centimes, cost us an average of 63 centimes." To supply this to 250 assistants was quite beyond the subsidy allowed the Relief. And yet the

workers certainly must be fed. Finally he admitted that he and a group of friends were contributing the money necessary to supply these meals. He added that in the beginning the men were hardly able to give more than two hours' hard work a day, but that after a few months of proper nourishment their energy was inexhaustible.

On another day I found there were no potatoes, and that the number of meals served had in consequence dropt fully 1,000; 743 at 75 centimes, 820 at 60 centimes, 1,473 at 30 centimes. If there are no potatoes to be had in the city, and they are known to be on the carte of the restaurant, there is not standing-room. Hundreds have to be turned away.

This kind of double œuvre is quite the most interesting of all the varied attempts to meet the staggering problem Belgium has daily to face.

XV

A ZEPPELIN

I WENT down the road toward Verviers. I stopt at a farmhouse to talk with the farmer about the pitiful ration of the Liége coal miners. They travel many miles underground, and there is no way of getting hot soup to them. His wife gave me a glass of sweet milk. Then we went into the courtyard where he had a great caldron of prune syrup simmering.

The summer had been wet and gray, but September was doing her best to make up for it. Suddenly I heard the soft whirr-whirr of a Zeppelin. I ran out into the road. The farmer left his prunes to join me. We watched the

great strange thing gliding through the sunshine. It was flying so low that we could easily distinguish the fins, the gondolas, the propellers. It looked more than anything else like a gigantic, unearthly model for the little Japanese stuffed fishes I had often seen in the toy shops. Its blunt nose seemed shining white, the rest a soft gray. The effect of the soothing whirring and its slow gliding through the air was indescribable; that it could be anything but a gentle messenger of peace was unbelievable. "Ah, Madame," said my companion, "four years ago *I* saw *my* first Zeppelin! It seemed a beautiful vision from another world, like something new in my religion. We all stood breathless, praying for the safety of this wonderful new being; praying that the brave men who conducted it might be spared to the world. And to-day, Madame, may it be blown to atoms; if necessary may its men

be cut to bits; may they be burned to ashes—anything—anything! With an undying hate I swear it shall be destroyed! Madame, that is what war does to a man! War, Madame, is a horrible thing!"

XVI

NEW USES OF A HIPPODROME

THE cereal and fat reserves are divided between Rotterdam, the mills, warehouses and moving lighters in Belgium and Northern France, so that one can never see the dramatic heaping up in one place of the grain that is to feed 10,000,000 for six days, or months. But the greater part of the clothing reserves are held in the one city of Brussels. Their housing furnishes another of the bewildering contrasts wrought by the war; what was two years ago a huge, thrilling Hippodrome is now filled with the silent ranks of bolts of cotton and flannel. And not

far away, the once popular skating-rink is piled to the ceiling with finished garments; stage boxes, galleries, dressing-rooms, stairways—all are heaped with cases and stacked with racks. The ceiling is the only part of the edifice still visible; along the rear wall, for instance, runs a big sign, "Garments for Babies," and they mount to the skylights. Stocks are accumulating in both these buildings and other sub-centers during the summer, and in the autumn the work of distribution against the approaching winter begins, October 1st registering the high-water mark of assets. At that time there were three and a half million pieces, yards and pairs, on the shelves of the Hippodrome, and already hundreds of thousands of garments assembled in the skating-rink.

The Rink is not more than a few yards and minutes from the Hippodrome, but a bolt of flannel may travel many miles

and occupy several weeks in going from one to the other. That journey explains the marvelous development of the clothing organization. One may go even further, and trace the cloth from the donor in America, to the recipient in Mons or Tournai! In fact, I once thought I recognized a finished blouse, as plaid flannel contributed in San Francisco. I may have been mistaken, but I let my mind follow that flannel from the hand of the little school-teacher on the Pacific, to the unhappy mother in Tournai!

For when the C. R. B. sent out a call for new clothing materials in January, 1916, somehow it reached a weather-beaten school-house on a lonely stretch of coast 30 miles south of San Francisco. The teacher hurriedly got together some wool, and began showing her eight pupils (they happened all to be boys), how to knit caps for other

boys of their own size. Their few families gathered what they could, and on her first free Saturday, the teacher started in an open buggy in the rain for the C. R. B. Bureau in San Francisco. This meant 30 miles over wretched roads, up hill and down, with her precious box. When we opened it we found eight knitted caps, one small sack of rice, one pair of fur-lined gloves, a bag of beans, a lady's belt, plaid flannel for a blouse, and 40 cents for eight five-cent stamps for the letters the boys hoped to receive in answer to those they had carefully tucked inside the caps. They did not know that our orders were to remove all writing from all gifts, tho once in a while a line did slip in. I saw a touching example of what these slips meant when I was leaving Brussels. A group of women came to me to say, "Madame, we hear you are going to California—is it true? And, if you are, may we not

send a message of just a single word by you? Will you not tell Margery Marshall, of Saratoga, that the pretty dress she sent over a year ago, made a little girl, oh, so happy! She has waited all these long months hoping to find a way to thank Margery—and we *want* to thank Margery. Will you tell her?"

These offerings then were freighted to New York with the month's contributions, and there consigned to a C. R. B. ship, starting for Rotterdam. In Rotterdam they were unloaded into the enormous C. R. B. clothing warehouse, a corrugated zinc structure as big as a city block. After the examinations, valuings and listings, they were reloaded on to one of the C. R. B. barges that ply the canals constantly, and finally deposited for the Comité National in the Hippodrome at Brussels. There the women's work began—in fact, to one woman especially is due the credit

for the completeness of the organization of this clothing department.

On a certain day the flannel for the blouse was piled into a big gray truck and hauled across the city to one of the most interesting places in Brussels. This is at once the central workroom for the capital, and the pattern and model department for all Belgium. Madame ... has 500 women and men working continually, to prepare the bundles of cut garments that go out to the sub-sections and homes in Brussels. If the seamstresses have children they may receive one bundle of sewing a week; if not, but one in a fortnight. In the ouvroir itself the work is divided between shifts who are allowed to come for a fortnight each. This is, of course, the great sorrow of the committees. If only there were enough work to give all the time to those whose sole appeal is that they be allowed to earn their soup

and bread! But every hour's work encourages somebody, and the opportunities are distributed just as widely as possible. In this way about 25,000 are reached in Greater Brussels alone.

The business of preparing these little packages of cut-out blouses and trousers and bibs is amazing. The placing of patterns to save cloth in the cutting is the first consideration; the counting off of the buttons, tapes, hooks and necessary furnishings for millions of garments—can we conceive the tediousness of this task? Instructions must be carefully marked on a card that is tied across the top of the completed bundle, everything being made as simple for the sewer as possible. They travel from one counter to another, from one room to the next, even up and down stairs, before compact, neat and complete, they are finally registered and ready to go to the waiting women, who will

make them into the skirts or baby slips or men's shirts or suits that the relief committees will distribute.

That is the Brussels side of the work; the national side appears in the pattern and model department. Madame has developed this to an extraordinary degree. Here dozens of people are bending over counters, folding, measuring, cutting heavy brown paper into shapes for every particular article that is to be given to every particular man, baby and woman in Belgium. There are patterns for children of every age, and for grown-ups, of every width and length—hundreds of patterns for all the workrooms in all the provinces. Then there are sample picture-charts showing how the patterns must be placed for the most advantageous cutting. Along with every type of pattern goes one finished model for exhibition in the workroom. In the models the women may see just how the little

ONE CORNER OF THE BRUSSELS HIPPODROME, NOW A CENTRAL CLOTHING SUPPLY STATION

bundles that started originally from the Hippodrome should look, when they are shipped back as garments to the Rink.

And it was for one of these models for a blouse that the school-teacher's plaid was used! As sample blouse it traveled from the Brussels pattern center to an ouvroir in the Southern Hainaut: it hung in a workroom in Mons! After hundreds of blouses had been copied from it and distributed in the province, the pattern department decided to change the blouse model, and the old one was sent back to Brussels to the skating-rink, to be apportioned again, as it happened, to the relief committee in Tournai, which knew the need of the mother who wore it the day I saw her! Too much system, you will say. But there should be no such criticism until one has seen with his own eyes several millions depending entirely on a relief organization for covering

(blankets and shoes, too, are a necessary part of the aid given), and realize the terrible obligations to divide the work among as many as possible of the thousands of unemployed, the necessity of a high standard of work, and of justice in division among the nine provinces.

The scraps from the floors of the ouvroirs are carefully hoarded in sacks, in the hope that the Germans may grant the committee the right to use a factory to re-weave them into some rough materials in the absence of cotton and wool. Some of these cuttings are at present being used as filling for quilts.

The constant contributions of time and service at the strictly business ends —in the warehouses, or depots like the Hippodrome, or the skating-rink—seem more generous than all others. In these places the committees are shut away from that daily contact with misery that

evokes a quick response. The business there has settled down to a matter of lists and accounts: one must work with a far vision for inspiration. It is quite a different matter in the actual ouvroir, where grateful women come all day and sew, and are sometimes allowed to keep their little children beside them. There you have their stories and know their suffering; you are able, also, to teach them, while they sew, how to care for their bodies and their homes, even to sing, and all the while you realize that the very garments they are putting together are to go to others even more unhappy—these are the places where service has its swift and rich rewards! I have visited just such blessed workrooms in Namur and Charleroi and Mons, in Antwerp and Dinant, in fact in dozens of cities up and down the length of Belgium. If they could be gaily flagged as they should be, we

should see all the country dotted with these centers of hope. And we should know that they meant that thousands of women in Belgium are being given at least a few days' work every month.

XVII

THE ANTWERP MUSIC-HALL

BEFORE the war the big music-hall in Antwerp offered a gay and diverting program. Every night thousands drifted in to laugh and smoke —drawn by the human desire for happiness. Here they were care-free, irresponsible; tragedy was forgotten.

To-day it is still a music-hall. As Madame opened the door—from the floor, from the galleries, from every part of the vast place floated a wonderful solemn music—1,200 girls were singing a Flemish folk-song that might have been a prayer. We looked on a sea of golden and brown heads bending over

sewing tables. Noble women had rescued them from the wreckage of war—within the shelter of this music-hall they were working for their lives, singing for their souls!

And all the time they were preparing the sewing and embroidery materials for 3,300 others working at home. In other words, this was one of the blessed ouvroirs or workrooms of Belgium.

Off at the left a few tailors were cutting men's garments. High on the stage, crowded with packing-cases, sat the committee of men who give all their time to measuring the goods, registering the income and output of materials and finished garments. On the stage, too, was an extraordinary exhibit. Three forms presented three of the quaintest silk dresses imaginable, elaborately trimmed with ribbons and velvets and laces, and all designed for women of dainty figure. I laughed and then rather

flushed, as I remembered the stories of the white satin slippers and chiffon ball gowns that had been included in our clothing offering of 1914. I murmured something of apology, and referred to the advance the Commission had made in 1915, when it had sent out the appeal for new materials only.

But Madame protested: "Oh," she said, "these are here in honor! And we know that somebody once loved these dainty dresses, and for that reason gave them to us. We love your old clothes! Our only sadness is that we can not have them any more. One old dress to be made over gives work for days and days, while the new materials can be put together in one or two. What will become of all my girls now that I shall have no more of your old clothes to furnish them? How shall they earn their 3 francs (60 cents) a week? At best we can allow each but eight days' work out

of fifteen, and only one person from each family may have this chance.

"But these three dresses we shall not touch!" And she smiled as she looked again at her exhibit.

Here the whole attitude toward the clothing is from the point of view, not of the protection it gives, but of the employment it offers. Without this employment, without the daily devotion of the wonderful women who have built up this astonishing organization, thousands of other women must have been on the streets—with no opportunity (except the dread, ever present one) through these two years to earn a franc, with nothing but the soup-lines to depend on for bread. Of course, there is always dire need for the finished garments. They are turned over as fast as they can be to the various other committees that care for the destitute. Between February, 1915, and May, 1916,

THE ANTWERP MUSIC-HALL, NOW A SEWING-ROOM

Here hundreds of women are being saved, by being furnished the opportunity to work two weeks in each month, on an average wage of sixty cents a week

articles valued at over 2,000,000 francs were given out in this way through this ouvroir alone.

But one could endure cold—anything is better than the moral degradation following long periods of non-employment. So it is not of the garments, but of the 9,500,000 francs dispensed as wages, that these women think. The work *must* go on. "See," Madame said, "what we do with the veriest scraps!" A young woman was putting together an attractive baby quilt. She had four pieces of an old coat, large enough to make the top and lining, and inside she was stitching literally dozens of little scraps of light woolen materials. Another was making children's shoes out of bits of carpet and wool.

In one whole section the girls do nothing but embroider our American flour sacks. Artists draw designs to represent the gratitude of Belgium to the

United States. The one on the easel as we passed through, represented the lion and the cock of Belgium guarding the crown of the king, while the sun—the great American eagle—rises in the East. The sacks that are not sent to America as gifts are sold in Belgium as souvenirs. Each sack has its value before being worked. Many of them—especially in the north of France—have been made into men's shirts, and tiny babies' shirts and slips.

Before July, 1916, in the Charleroi ouvroir, over 30,000 sacks had been made into 15,000 shirts at a cost of 25 centimes per sack, and a sewing price of 30 centimes each.

Each Monday the women may work on their own garments, and on Tuesday all the poor of the city bring their clothing to be patched or darned. A shoe section, too, does what it can for old shoes. Such shoes and such remnants of socks

and of shirts as we saw! But the more difficult the job, the happier the committee!

During the week, courses are given in the principles of dressmaking and design. In the evening there are classes for history, geography, literature, writing, and very special attention is given to hygiene, which is taught by means of the best modern slides. These things are splendid, and with the three francs a week wages, spell self-respect, courage, progress all along the line. The committee has always been able to secure the money for the wages, but they can not possibly furnish the materials—sufficient new ones they could never have.

They are living from day to day on the hope that the C. R. B. may be able to make an exception for the Antwerp ouvroir, and appeal once more for her precious necessity—"old clothes!" This

the C. R. B. may be able to do—but will England feel equally free to make an exception to her ruling that since the Germans have taken the wool from the Belgian sheep, no clothing of any kind can be sent in?

As I was leaving, a thrilling thing happened. Picture this sea of golden and brown heads low over the heaped tables—every square foot of pit, galleries and entry packed, lengths of cotton and flannel flung in confusion over all the balconies and from the royal box like war banners—and then suddenly see a man making his way through the crowded packing-cases on the stage to the footlights! He was the favorite baritone of this one-time concert hall, and he has come (as he does twice a week) to stand in the midst of the packing-cases behind his accustomed footlights to sing to this audience driven in by disaster, and to teach them the beau-

tiful Flemish folk-songs. They sing as they work. For several minutes neither Madame nor I spoke. Then she smiled swiftly and said: "Yes, it is sadly beautiful—and you know, incidentally, it prevents much idle chatter!"

XVIII

LACE

A FULL account of the struggle of the lace-workers would take us straight to the heart of the tragedy of Belgium. At present it can only be intimated. The women who are back of this struggle represent a fine intelligence, a most fervent patriotism and most unswerving devotion to their people and their country.

Before the war, her laces were the particular pride of Belgium. Flanders produced, beside the finest linen, the most exquisite lace known. The Queen took this industry under her especial patronage and tried in every way to better the condition of the workers, and to

raise the standard of the output. We need to remember that when war broke out, 50,000 women were supporting themselves, and often their families, through this work; we need to remember the suddenness with which the steel ring was thrown about Belgium—all import of thread, all export of lace, at once and entirely cut off. In a few weeks, in a few days, thousands of women were without hope of earning their bread—at least in the only way hitherto open to them. The number grew with desperate swiftness. And we need most of all to remember that the chief lace centers were in the zone under direct military rule.

Women like Madame . . . grappled with this situation, trying to save their workers (most of them young girls) from the dread alternative, trying by one means and another to give them heart, and hoping always that America could make a way

for them, till finally that hope was realized—the C. R. B. had gained the permission of England to bring in a certain amount of thread, and to take out a corresponding amount of lace for sale in France and England, or elsewhere.

A fever of effort followed. Everywhere those who had been trying to keep the groups of lace-workers alive were given thread. They organized centers for the control of the output. The thread must be weighed as it was given out, and paid for by the worker as a guaranty that it would not be sold to some one else; the weight of the lace turned in must tally. Much thought must be put in the selection of designs, into the choice of articles to be made—things that would interest the people of England and France and America.

Certain parts and kinds of these laces are made in certain districts only. I am told that the very fine Malines lace,

THE SUPPLEMENTARY MEAL THE RELIEF COMMITTEE IS NOW TRYING TO GIVE TO 1,250,000 SCHOOL CHILDREN

made now only in a restricted area, will not be found much longer. All these separate parts must be brought to the central depot to be made into tea-cloths and doilies and other articles for export. The finest and most necessary laces and the linen for the cloths are made in or about Bruges and Courtrai and in other towns in Flanders, in what is known as the "Étape," or zone of military preparation, with which it is almost impossible to communicate.

The C. R. B. is made absolutely responsible to England that no lace will be sold in the open market in the occupied territory (altho it was allowed to be sold in October and November, 1915, at exhibitions in several of the large cities of Belgium), and that all of it be exported. If it is not sold, it must be held at Rotterdam.

One can imagine the meaning of the first export of lace to those whose hearts

were in this work. It was not only that they saw the lace-workers kept alive, but they saw their country reunited with the outside world. Her beautiful laces were going to those who would buy them eagerly, her market would be kept open.

Of necessity, the work became strongly centralized. The Brussels bureau, where three noble women especially were giving literally every day of their time and every particle of their energy and talent, became the official headquarters, and 45,000 lace-workers were employed under orders sent out by this central committee. Every day they came to plan, to design, to direct. They were handling thousands of articles, and hundreds of thousands of francs. They carefully examined every yard sent in, rejecting any piece below the standard, encouraging excellence in every possible way. Never in recent

times have there been such beautiful laces made, and they are being sold at about half what was asked before the war. Many of the designs are copies of the best ancient models, other lovely ones turn on the present situation, having for motive the roses of the Queen, the arms of the provinces, the animals of the Allies.

Madame ... made an unforgettable picture—tall, golden-haired, exquisite, arranging and re-arranging the insets for her cloths and cushions—and recounting, as she set her patterns, the steps in the struggle for the lace-workers. There had been dangers, some were in prison. As I listened I felt the fire within must consume her. I understood why there were women in prison, why martyrdom was always a near and real possibility.

There were always discouragements of one kind or another. At the bureau, one day, Madame's eyes were red when

she came downstairs. She had just had to turn off a group of workers; there was no thread to give them. At best, in order that all may be helped a little, no one person may work more than 30 hours a week, nor receive more than 3 francs (or 60 cents) a week as wages!

But on the whole the lace committees are overwhelmingly grateful for the opportunities they have had. Up to November, 1916, they have dispensed 6,000,000 francs in wages. They have given two weeks' work a month to 45,000 women, 25,000 of whom are skilled, 10,000 of average ability, and 10,000 beginners. There will be a deficit when the war is over. "But what of that?" they say, "if only we can keep on! On the Great Day we shall give back to the Queen her chosen industry, fully three years ahead of where she left it. She will find all the standards raised, her women better trained and equipped

to care for themselves, and to re-establish Belgium as the lace-maker of the world."

It has been extremely difficult for the C. R. B. to handle the lace in the United States. Its great value necessitates much more machinery and time than could be spared from the all-important ravitaillement duty. The orders from England and France are much easier to take care of. On one happy day Paquin wrote for all the Point de Paris and Valenciennes they could supply. Certain friends in London and New York are every now and then sending in individual requests. On a red-letter day the Queen of Roumania ordered, through her Legation, three very beautiful table-cloths, and quantities of other fine laces. And it is the hope of the committee that the number of these friends will grow. Needless to say, hardly a C. R. B. representative leaves

Belgium without taking with him some example of this exquisite work, a testimony to others of the splendid devotion of the women of these lace committees.

XIX

A TOY FACTORY

I WAS reminded again to-day of how constant work must be the only thing that makes living possible to many of these women. We were at lunch, when suddenly the roar of the German guns cut across our talk. We rushed into the street, where a gesticulating crowd had already located the five Allied aeroplanes high above us. Little white clouds dotted the sky all about them — puffs of white smoke that marked the bursting shrapnel. Tho the guns seemed to be firing just behind our house, we believed we were quite out of danger. However, Marie ran to us quite white and with her hands over her ears. "Oh, Madame!" she cried, "the shrap-

nel is bursting all about the kitchen!" She had experienced it. She had told me once that her sister had died of fright three days after the war began, and I realized now that she probably had. Our picturesque Léon slipt over to assure me that this was not a real attack, but just a visit to give us hope on the second anniversary of the beginning of the war, to tell us the Allies were thinking of us, and that we should soon be delivered. Without doubt they would drop a message of some sort.

I thought of our United States Minister and his proximity to the Luxembourg railroad station. He had several times smilingly exprest concern over that proximity.

I remembered, too, the swift answer of Monsieur ... who lives opposite the railroad station at Mons. Bombs had just been dropt on this station—one had fallen in front of his house, and when

I asked if he and his wife would not consider moving he replied, "Madame, our two sons are in the trenches—should we not be ashamed to think of this as danger?"

All the while the aeroplanes were circling and the guns were booming. Then suddenly one of the aviators made a sensational drop to within a few hundred meters of the Molenbeek Station, threw his bombs, and before the guns could right themselves, regained his altitude—and all five were off, marvelously escaping the puffs of white before and behind them.

This was thrilling, till suddenly flashed the sickening realization of what it really meant. The man behind the gun was doing his utmost to kill the man in the machine. It was horrible—horrible to us.

But to Belgian wives and mothers what must it have been? As they

looked up they cried: "Is that my boy, —my husband, who has come back to his home this way? After two years, is he there? My God, can they reach him?" The only answer was the roar of the guns, the bursting shrapnel—and they covered their eyes.

I visited Madame ..., whose only son is in the flying corps, at her toy factory, the following day, and realized what the experience had cost her. Her comment, however, was, "Well, now I believe I am steeled for the next."

Madame is accomplishing one of the finest pieces of work being done in Belgium to-day. Before the war she had a considerable reputation as a painter in water colors. As suddenly as it came, she found her home emptied of sons, brothers, nephews, and she went through the common experience of trying to construct something from the chaos of those tragic days. Her first

thought was of what must be done for the little nephews and nieces who were left. They must be kept happy as well as alive. And she wondered if she could not turn her painting to use in making toys for them. Often before the war when sketching in Flanders she had looked at the quaint old villages, full of beauty in color and line, and felt that each was a jewel in itself and ought, somehow, to be preserved as a whole. And suddenly she decided to try and reproduce them in toy form for children. She drew beautiful designs of the villages of Furnes and Dixmude, loving ones of churches that had already been destroyed. She secured wood, began carving her houses, trees, furniture—then arranged her villages, drawing the patterns for the children to build from. Needless to say the nieces and nephews were enchanted; and she worked ahead on other villages for other children.

Not very long after this she visited the Queen's ambulance in the palace at Brussels, and as she talked with the wounded Belgian soldiers, the thought of the hopeless future of the mutilated ones tormented her. It suddenly flashed over her that they might be given hope, if they could be taught to make her beloved toys. She was allowed to bring in models—the soldiers were interested at once—the authorities gave her permission to teach them.

Later she secured a building in Brussels—her sister-in-law and others of her family came to help. They wisely laid in a good supply of beechwood in advance, got their paints and other materials ready, and began to work with a handful of soldiers. She soon needed machines for cutting the wood, and then found that no matter how thoroughly healed, a man who has been terribly wounded, the equilibrium of whose body

had been destroyed by the loss of an arm or leg, or both, could not soon be trusted with a dangerous machine—and she had to engage a few expert workmen for this department. Girls begged to be taken in, and she added nine to her fifty soldiers—one of them a pretty, black-haired refugee from the north of France. The thick book with all the addresses of applicants for work who have had to be refused, is a mute evidence of the saddest part of this whole situation —the lack of work for those who beg to be kept off the soup-lines.

The fortunate ones are paid by piecework, but always the directors try to arrange that each man shall be able to earn about 2½ francs a day.

Madame is not merely accomplishing a present palliative, but aiming at making men self-respecting, useful members of the State for their own and their country's good.

XX

ANOTHER TOY FACTORY

THE following day, I visited another kind of toy factory. Madame . . ., who had lost her only son early in the war, works probably in the most inconvenient building in Brussels, which she has free of charge. She works there all day long, every day, furnishing employment for between 30 and 40 girls, who would otherwise have to be on the soupes. I went from one room to another, where they were busily constructing dolls, and animals, and all sorts of fascinating toys out of bits of cotton and woolen materials — cheap, salable toys.

This is one of the things that we must

remember if we wish properly to appreciate the work the women are doing—most of it is being carried on in buildings that we should consider almost impossible—no elevators; everywhere the necessity of climbing long flights of stairs; no convenient sanitary arrangements—but nothing discourages them.

Madame began by making bouncing balls in the Belgian colors, stuffed with a kind of moss. They cost only a few centimes, and sold as fast as she could make them. When the order came that they were no longer to be made in these colors, she ripped up those she had on hand, and began new ones, omitting the black. The balls must go on. Another day all the stuffing for her balls was requisitioned. She rushed out, up and down, street after street, seeking a substitute, and by night the little storeroom was filled with a kind of dry grass —and the balls could go on.

The day of my first visit there were 6 of the 32 girls absent because of illness. Madame said she usually had that large a percentage out because of intestinal troubles of one sort or another. They get desperately tired of their monotonous food, and whenever they can scrape together a few extra pennies, they go to one of the few chocolate shops still open and make themselves ill.

Here, too, they are looking to America. If only they could get their toys to our markets, they could take in many who are suffering for want of work—and one feels that America would be delighted with every toy.

It is Madame herself who designs them. She is trying always to get something new, striking. In the C. R. B. office one day I noticed a representative off in a corner, busy with his pencil, and found him struggling to represent some

TOYS CREATED BY WOMEN OF BELGIUM

sort of balancing bird—a suggestion for Madame.

She makes these lovely toys from the veriest scraps of cloth, old paper, straw, with pebbles picked up from the roads for weights.

In the beginning she knew nothing at all about such work, nor did any one of the young girls she was trying to help. But such a spirit experiments! She ground newspapers in a meat-grinder to try to evolve some kind of papier-mâché. She learned her processes by producing things with her own hands, and then taught each woman as she employed her. Thus she, too, is not only keeping her corps from the present soup-line, but preparing a body of trained workers for the future. The shops in Brussels sell these toys—a few have reached as far as Holland.

Everywhere in Belgium one is imprest with the facility in the handling of

color, of clay or wood. There is the most unusual feeling for decorative effect; the tiniest children in the schools show a striking aptitude for design and modeling, and an astonishing sense of rhythm. One is constantly struck by this; it is a delight to hear a group of three-year olds carrying an intricate song without accompaniment, as they go through the figures of a dance.

XXI

THE MUTILÉS

AT last I met the little Madame—all nerve, energy—a flame flashing from one plant under her charge to the next. I had seen her whirling by in a car, one of the two Belgian women allowed a limited pass. I had heard how she presided over councils of men, as well as of women; that she had won the admiration of all. With her it is not a question of how many hours she spends; she gives literally every hour of her time. It was especially of her work for the mutilated victims of the war that we talked this morning. She took me to the park at Woulwe, where she has 180 men being trained in various trades.

Ten months ago she decided that one of the most important things Belgium had to accomplish was to save its mutilated for themselves and the State. The whole problem of the unemployment brought on by the war was terrific. In April, 1916, over 672,000 workmen were idle. But the mutilated soldiers formed the most heartbreaking part of this problem. They must at once be taught trades that would fill their days and make them self-supporting in the future.

First of all, their surroundings must be cheerful and healthy; no cramped buildings in the city, and yet something easily accessible from Brussels. She told me how she searched the environs until she came upon an old, apparently deserted villa at Woulwe with beautiful spacious grounds, orchard and vegetable garden. She quickly sought out the owner and appealed to him to turn his property over to the "Mutilés." In

three days a letter told her the request was granted, and within a few hours an architect was at work on the plans. He developed a cottage system with everything on one floor, sleeping-rooms, workrooms, unlimited fresh air and light; the most modern sanitary equipment; and for the workrooms, every practical arrangement possible. There is a gymnasium with a resident physician directing the work. His duty is one of the most difficult; it is not easy to convince the men of the value of all the bothersome exercises he prescribes. The restoration of the equilibrium of their broken bodies is to them often a vague end. At first some even try to escape using the artificial arms and legs provided them.

The cottages are grouped about the garden, under the trees, connected by easy little paths for the lame and the blind. The old villa holds the office,

the dining-room, and a big, airy pavilion, where the men may gather for a weekly entertainment, cards or music. A bowling alley has been converted into the quaintest little chapel imaginable, with the Virgin Mary and the statues of the King and Queen in very close company, and back of them a splendid Belgian flag. Besides the regular gatherings, the men hold special services here for their comrades dead on the Field of Honor.

One by one new cottages are being built; more trades are being taught. Electricity and book-binding have been added recently, and the course for chauffeurs. The greater number of the men work in the shoe shops, where there is one workroom for the Walloons and another for the Flemings; but the scarcity of leather greatly hinders this important department. In certain sections they are already using machinery manu-

factured by the men themselves. And it must be kept in mind all the time that these men before the war were almost without exception in the fields.

Madame told us that the most cheerful workmen are the blind, who seemed, however, most to be pitied, as they sat there weaving their baskets and chair seats. She said that often during their weekly entertainments the entire company would be thrown into spasms of laughter by the sudden meowing of cats or cackling of hens in their midst. These were the tricks of the blind men, who were as gay as children.

The *atelier* is truly a joyous place, set in a garden tended by the soldiers, and inside flooded with light. The walls are covered with models and designs. Some of the men were busy with patterns for lace and embroidery. Others were modeling. A legless soldier, in the trenches only a month ago, was already

handling his clay with pleasure and skill. But the most remarkable work was that of a man who had lost his right arm. Before the war, like the others, he had been a "cultivateur," never conscious of a talent that under the encouragement of a good teacher was developing astonishingly. With the pencil in his left hand, he produced designs of leaves, flowers and animals of great beauty.

One of the strangest, saddest sights in the world is the workroom for artificial limbs. Here men who have lost their own arms and legs sit constructing arms and legs for their comrades who are to lose theirs on the battlefield. A soldier who had his right arm and all but two fingers of his left hand shot away, was filing, hammering, and shaping an artificial arm. A man with half of each forearm gone was able, by means of a simple leather appliance, to make thirty-five brushes a day. Here they

were making, too, the gymnasium apparatus for the muscular exercises which help to restore the equilibrium of their own bodies.

After visiting all the workshops, we went to one of the cheery cottage dormitories. It was noon-time now, and the men, deciding that we were apt to pass that way, had quickly decorated the front porch with the flags of the Allies, daringly binding our American flag with them! Then with a yellow sand they had written on the darker earth in front of the cottage: "To the Welcome Ones—the Brave Allies"—(again they had included us!) "we offer the gratitude of their soldiers!"

XXII

THE LITTLE PACKAGE

ONE morning in Antwerp I saw women with string bags filled with all sorts of small packages, some with larger boxes in their arms, hurrying toward a door over which was the sign "Le Petit Paquet"—the Little Package. In the hallway many others were trying to decipher various posted notices. One black-haired woman, empty bag in hand, was going through the list marked "Kinds and quantities of food allowed in 'Le Petit Paquet' for our soldiers, prisoners in Germany."

This, then told the story—husbands and sons were in prison—wives and mothers were here! The posted notices, the organizations within achieved by 24

devoted women—the mountains of little brown packages each carefully addrest, approved for contents and weight, and ready for shipment—these connected the two sad extremes.

This morning the receiving-room was crowded, as it is every morning, I am told. The directors had been standing back of the long counters since 7:30; women of every class pressing along the front, depositing their precious offerings.

Each prisoner is allowed a monthly 500-gram parcel-post package, and a 10-pound box, which may contain, beside food, tobacco and clothing. The permitted articles include cocoa, chocolate and coffee; tinned fish and vegetables and soups; powdered milk and jam. Soap may be sent with the clothing. One mother had arranged her parcels in a pair of wooden sabots which she hoped to have passed.

Such a rush of unwrapping, weighing, re-wrapping. There seemed hardly a moment for breathing, and yet somehow there was time to listen to stories, to answer questions, give courage to hundreds who found in these rooms their closest connection with their loved ones. One could see that they were loath to go—they would have liked to stay and watch the final wrapping and registering—to actually *see* their tokens to the train!

On this day there was a special gift box from Cardinal Mercier for every prisoner from the province. Antwerp has 6,000 prisoners in Germany, and through the offerings of relatives or friends, or of the city itself when these fail, each one receives a permitted gift.

One sees at a glance what an enormous task the bookkeeping alone entails—record of contents, addresses of senders, distribution, registering of re-

ceived packages, and numberless other entries. And each month the instructions are changing, which renders the work still more arduous.

And one is astonished over and over again at the amount of sheer physical energy women are putting into their service. Belgium has some 40,000 prisoners in Germany. In Brussels and other cities other women are repeating what the directors in Antwerp were doing that morning.

XXIII

THE GREEN BOX

THERE are seven rooms in Brussels, each with a long table in the middle, and with rows upon rows of green wooden boxes (about the size of a macaroni box) on shelf-racks against walls. The racks, too, are painted the color of hope—the green which after the war might well deserve a place with the red, orange and black, for having so greatly comforted the people when all display of their national colors was suppressed. Each box has a hook in front from which hangs a pasteboard card, marked with a number; it hangs there if the box is full, when empty it is filed.

The first morning I happened in on one of these sections, I found a director and three pretty young girls feverishly busy with hundreds and hundreds of little paper bags. There were as many green boxes as the table would hold, arranged before them, with scales at either end. They were running back and forth from the pantry with a bowl or an apronful of something, and then weighing and pouring into the bags tiny portions of beans and chicory, salt and sugar, bacon and other things. They weighed and poured as fast as they could and with almost joyous satisfaction tucked the little bags one after another into the boxes. Then they dove into the big vegetable baskets at one end of the room, and each box was made gay with a lettuce or cauliflower. For some there were bottles of milk, or a few precious potatoes or eggs. If the egg chest had been gold, it could hardly have been

more treasured. For a moment it seemed the war must be a horrible dream. This was really the day before Christmas! There were even a few red apples—as a special surprize, some one had contributed two kilos that day. Since they were obviously far short of enough to furnish one for each box, the directors decided to tuck one into the box for each mother whom they knew to have a little boy or girl. Box after box took its place on the shelves until finally, by two o'clock, all gaps were filled, and a curious wall-garden grew half-way up to the ceiling. It might well have been Christmas, but actually this scene had been repeated two days a week, week in and week out, for over two and a half years, and nobody stops to question how many long months it must continue.

Some time before the last box was on its shelf, the first woman with a string

bag on her arm arrived. She was carefully drest, intelligent-looking, a woman of about fifty. Later I found that before the war she had a comfortable home, with servants and a motor-car. She slipt quietly along the racks till she found the card with her number, took her box from the shelf and transferred the tiny sacks and the two eggs to her string bag. Then she placed the little packet of empty bags and string she was returning on the table, and, after answering a few questions about her two children, went slowly downstairs. None but the Committee, or equally unfortunate ones who came as she did, need know she had been there. This was Wednesday; she could come again on Friday. Other women came, and, as the first, each could go to her box without asking, and find the precious packages—mere mouthfuls as they seemed to me!

I thought I smelled soup, and followed Madame ... to a little side room where I saw chairs and a white-covered table. Her cook was just depositing a big can of thick soup which she had been preparing at home, and which Madame had ordered brought to the center each distribution day. Any one who wishes may slip into this room on her way out, sit at a dainty table, and drink a bowl of hot soup.

By half-past two the place was filled. Dozens of women were busy with their bags and boxes, while half a dozen directors were tidying up, storing strings and sacks, filing cards, washing utensils; there was a most heartening atmosphere of busyness and cheerfulness. And all the while one group was telling its story to the other and receiving the comfort warm hearts could give. I overheard the promise of a bed to one, or coal to another, and over and over again the

"Yes, I understand; I, too, am without news." From all the husbands and sons at the front no word! These women met on the ground of their common suffering. One of the saddest of all sad things happened that afternoon, when a mother, on seeing the lovely "unnecessary" apple, burst into tears. For so long, so long, her little Marie had had nothing but the ration prescribed to keep her from starving. This mother broke down as she dropt the red apple into her bag.

These were all people who had been well-off, even comfortable, but whose funds either suddenly, at the beginning, or gradually through the two terrible years, had been exhausted. Mostly their men were in the trenches; there were children or old people to care for; they had done their utmost, but at last were forced to accept help. I wondered how these few pitiful little bags could make any difference. The slice of unsmoked

bacon was neither so broad nor so thick as the palm of my hand, and yet that was to be their meat and butter for three days! In this distribution center it seemed absolutely nothing, but when I visited the homes later I saw it was a great deal.

In Brussels there were in October, 1916, no less than 5,000 "Pauvres Honteux" or "Ashamed Poor" (there must be many more now) being helped through the seven sections of this "Assistance Discrète," each of which carries the same beautiful motto, "Donne, et tais-toi," "Give, and be silent." At the very beginning of the war a great-hearted woman saw where the chief danger of misery lay. The relief organizations would naturally first look after the wounded, the homeless, the very poor. Those who were accustomed to accept charity would make the earliest demands. But what about those whose business was

slowly being ruined, whose reserves were small? What about school-teachers, artists, and other members of professional classes? And widows living on securities invested abroad, or children of gentle upbringing, whose fathers had gone to the front expecting to return in three or four months? She saw many of them starving rather than go on the soup-lines.

She had a vision of true mutual aid. Each person who had should become the sister of her who had not. There should be a sharing of individual with individual. She did not think of green boxes or sections, but of person linked with person in the spirit of Fraternity. But the number of the desperate grew too rapidly, her first idea of direct individual help had to be abandoned, and one after another distribution centers were organized. An investigator was put in charge of each center who reported personally

on all the cases that were brought in, either directly or indirectly to the committee. The Relief Committee granted a subsidy of 10,000 francs a month, which, one sees at a glance, can not nearly cover the need. So day after day the directors of each section canvass their districts for money and food, and by dint of an untiring devotion raise the monthly 10,000 to about 28,000 francs. But, unfortunately, every day more of war means wretched ones forced to the wall, and this sum is always far from meeting the distress. We have only to divide the 30,000 francs by the 5,000 on the lists, to see what, at best, each family may receive.

I went with Mademoiselle ..., an investigator, to visit one of these families. A charming old gentleman received us. I should say he was about seventy-three. He had been ill, and was most cheerful over what he called his "recovery," tho

to us he still looked far from well. The drawing-room was comfortable, spotlessly clean; there was no fire. We talked of his children, both of whom were married; one son was in Italy, another in Russia—the war had cut off all word or help from both. He himself had been a successful engineer in his day, but he had not saved much, his illness and two years of war had eaten up everything. He was interested in Mexico and in the Panama Canal, and we chatted on until Mademoiselle felt we must go. As we were shaking hands, she opened her black velvet bag and took out an egg which she laughingly left on the table as her visiting card. She did it perfectly, and he laughed back cheerily, "After the war, my dear, I shall certainly find the hen that will lay your golden eggs!" Outside, I still could hardly pull myself together—one egg as a precious gift to a dignified old gentleman-engineer! Could

it be possible? "But," explained Mademoiselle, "if I had not given him that egg, he would not have any egg!" Eggs were costing about ten cents each. "Of course, we never even discuss meat," she added; "but he has been quite ill, and he must have an egg at least every two or three days!"

The woman we visited next did not have a comfortable home, but a single room. She had been for many years a governess in a family in Eastern Belgium, but just before the war both she and the family had invested their money in a savings concern which had gone to pieces, and from that day she had been making the fight to keep her head above water. She had come to Brussels, was succeeding fairly well, when she was taken ill. She had had an operation, but after months there was still an open wound, and she could drag herself about only with great difficulty. I found that Mademoiselle

takes her to the hospital, a matter of hours, three times a week for treatment, and, besides that, visits her in her room. As we were talking, a niece, also unfortunately without funds, came in to polish the stove and dust a bit. Mademoiselle reported that she was pretty sure of being able to bring some stockings to knit on her next visit. These would bring five cents a pair. And, as we left, she gave another egg, and this time a tiny package of cocoa, too. I discovered that every morsel this governess has to eat comes to her from Mademoiselle. And yet I have never been in a room where there was greater courage and cheerfulness.

So it was as we went from square to square. In some homes there were children with no father; in others, grandfathers with neither children nor grandchildren; and between them, people well enough, young enough, but simply ruined by the war. Mademoiselle was going back

to spend the night with an old lady we had visited the week before, and had found reading Anatole France. She had felt she must make her last testament, and looking at her we agreed. That week she had received word that her only son, who was also her only kin, had been killed in the trenches three months before.

Of course, every city has its hundreds of unfortunates; there must be everywhere some form of "Assistance Discrète," but most of those on the lists of this war-time organization would in peace time be the ones to give, rather than receive, and their number is increasing pitifully as month follows month.

Every one permitted to be in Belgium for any length of time marvels at the incredible, unbreakable spirit of its people. They meet every new order of the military authorities with a laugh; when they have to give up their motor-cars, they

ride on bicycles; when all bicycle tires are requisitioned, they walk cheerfully; if the city is fined 1,000,000 marks, the laconic comment is: "It was worth it!" All the news is censored, so they manufacture and circulate cheerful news—nothing ever breaks through their smiling, defiant solidarity. One thing only in secret I have heard them admit, and that is the anguish of their complete separation from their loved ones at the front. Mothers and wives of every other nation may have messages; they, never.

The thing that has bound them thus together and buoyed them up is just this enveloping, inter-penetrating atmosphere of mutual aid, so beautifully exprest every day through the work of the "Assistance Discrète." It was this vision of Fraternity in its widest sense that gave it birth, and every day the women of Belgium are making that vision a blessed reality.

XXIV

THE "MOTHER OF BELGIUM"

MR. HOOVER'S visits to Brussels are crowded with conferences, endless complications to be straightened out, figures and reports to be accepted or rejected—with all the unimaginable difficulties incident to the relief of an occupied territory.

Responsible on the one hand to England, on the other to Germany, dependent always on the continued active support of his own countrymen and on the efficiency and integrity of the local relief organization, he fights his way literally inch by inch and hour by hour to bring in bread for the Belgian mother and her child.

1,662 CHILDREN, MADE SUB-NORMAL BY THE WAR, WAITING FOR THEIR DINNER

It is easy to conceive of such service if the giver is in close touch with the mother and her need, but when he must be cut off from her—locked up with the grind, the disillusionment, the staggering obstacles, this unbroken devotion through the days and nights of more than two years, becomes one of the finest expressions of altruism the world has seen.

The two years have left their mark—to strangers he must seem silent, grim, but every C. R. B. man knows what this covers.

On one visit I persuaded him to take an hour from the bureau to go with me to one of the cantines for sub-normal children. He stood silently as the 1,600 little boys and girls came crowding in, slipping in their places at the long, narrow tables that cut across the great dining-rooms, and, when I looked up at him, his eyes had filled with tears. He watched Madame and her husband, a physician,

going from one child to another, examining their throats, or their eyes, taking them out to the little clinic for weighing, carrying the youngest in their arms, while the dozen white-uniformed young women hurrying up and down the long rows were ladling the potato-stew and the rice dessert.

Then suddenly a black-shawled woman, evidently in deep distress, rushed up the stairs, and by us to Madame, to pour out her trouble. She was crying—she had run to the cantine, as a child to its mother, for comfort. Her little eight-year-old Marie, who had, only a week ago, been chosen as the loveliest child of the 1,600 to present the bouquet to the Minister's wife, and who, this very morning, had seemed well and happy, was lying at home dead of convulsions. The cantine had been the second home of her precious one for over two years—where, but there, should she flee in her sorrow?

I turned toward Mr. Hoover, and he spoke these true words: "The women of Belgium have become the Mother of Belgium. In this *room* is the Relief of Belgium!"

XXV

"OUT"

THE Rotterdam canals were choked with barges, weighted with freight; heavy trucks rattled down the streets, a whistle shrieked, telegraph wires hummed, motors flashed by—men were moving quickly, grouping themselves freely at corners; life—vivid, outspoken, free—crowded upon me, filling my eyes and ears. With a swift tremor of physical fear I huddled back in my seat. After eight months I was afraid of this thing!

And "Inside" I had thought I realized the whole of the cruel numbness. Slowly I had felt it closing in about me, closing down upon me, shutting me in with *them* —with terrors and anguish, with human souls that at any moment a hand might reach in to toss—where?

XXVI

FAREWELL

I CAN think of no more beautiful, final tribute to the women of Belgium than that carried in their own words—words of tragedy, but words of widest vision and understanding and generosity, sent in farewell to us:

"Oh, you who are going back in that free country of the United States, tell to all our sufferings, our distress; tell them again and again our cries of alarm, which come from our opprest and agonized hearts! You have lived and felt what we are living and feeling; we have understood that, higher than charity which gives, you brought us charity which understands and consoles! Your souls have bowed down over ours, our eyes with

anxiety are looking in your friendly eyes. Over the big ocean our wishes follow you. Oh, might you there remember the little Belgium! The life which palpitates in her grateful heart—she owes it to you! *You are our hope, our anchor! Help us! Do not abandon the work of charity you have undertaken!*

"Our endless gratitude goes to you, and from father to children, in the hovel and in the palace, we shall repeat your great heart, your high idealism, *your touching charity!*"

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